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1/6



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THE



LETTERS

OF

DIOGENES,

TO

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

"By repetition hammer'd on thine ear."

LONDON :

RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY ; AND RICHARDSON, CORNHILL.

1841.

Darling & Son, Printers, 31, Leadenhall Street.

TO THE MEMBERS OF

ANTI-CORN-LAW SOCIETIES,

WITH THE MOST SINCERE WISH AND HOPE, THAT THEIR

GENEROUS ENDEAVOURS,

AND

UNEXAMPLED LABOURS,

IN BEHALF OF SUFFERING HUMANITY,

MAY BE SPEEDILY CROWNED WITH TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS,

These Pages are dedicated,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

THE *Letters of Diogenes* are meant to resemble the strongly-marked sketches exhibited in booksellers' windows, for the purpose of attracting customers to the valuable volumes on the shelves within. Though a vast deal has been written about the *Corn Law*, daily experience convinces me that its nature is far from being generally understood. Indeed out of the immediate range of commercial circles, I have met with many well-educated men, absolutely unacquainted with the provisions and details of this enactment, and very small is the number of those who seem to have made it a subject of prolonged inquiry and regular study. Yet one would think, that what has so long agitated all parties, and repeatedly threatened to separate the nation into two irreconcilable factions, must claim general consideration. Even if *chance*, I mean bad seasons, should occasionally afford a temporary solution of the difficulty, still this vital question cannot be left for ever to the decision of such unstable arbiters as wind and weather; the moment must come when an opinion or a vote will be required from every one, and there can be no doubt, but all rational and conscientious men ought

to prepare themselves for the discharge of this duty by diligent labour and anxious investigation.

Those who are content to think on the authority of others, should, it seems to me, recollect that the advocates of free trade, and of the abandonment of all Corn Laws, number in their ranks a great many men to whom time, the safest test of true greatness, has conceded the glory of immortality, whereas the opposite party cannot boast of possessing amongst their supporters, even one name of distinguished fame. No Smiths, no Says, no Ricardos, have rendered themselves renowned by justifying or demonstrating the mysteries, the infinitely intricate and incomprehensible *theories*, of the so-called *practical man*, who maintains that it is the business of Government to rule nations by the complicated contrivances of protections, restrictions, prohibitions, and sliding scales.

To those wiser persons who will not be guided by the authority of others, and who, divesting themselves of all preconceived notions, habitual prejudices, and selfish bias, choose to come to this inquiry in a proper frame of mind, perhaps no better materials for useful study can be recommended, than *Sir Robert Peel's Speech of the 15th of March 1839*, which has called my Letters into existence.

The Right Honourable Baronet stands foremost amongst the advocates of the present Corn Law, and has even so late as the 29th of June last, most positively and distinctly (and that is not usual with him) declared himself in favour of its continuance; but in the above-mentioned speech he has developed the mental processes, by which he arrives at his decision, and I

feel convinced, these need only to be carefully and repeatedly investigated, to make every inquirer participate in my astonishment and indignation, that the fate of a great nation should depend, to so large an extent, on such a man, such a mind, and such a measure.

The most conspicuous feature in this speech is the ready tact with which Sir Robert Peel avails himself of the statements of his opponents, whilst he cautiously abstains from any argument of an original nature, or which might, strictly speaking, be called his own. Cunning and wariness are the distinguishing characteristics of his oration, and obtrude themselves in every sentence upon our notice: but these leave the question in reality where it was before, for truth is no less truth, because its defenders are deficient in wisdom and skill; and as the tricks of shallow sophistry may puzzle the most upright mind, and entrap us into a momentary assent against the evidences of fact, or the conviction of our moral sense, so Sir Robert seems to have entrapped parliamentary majorities, though time and experience have belied his inferences, and laughed his predictions to scorn; for time is no flatterer, truth a stern and unyielding opponent, and events are not, as conservative members, under the command of a whipper-in.

Who can fail to perceive, that in his processes of ratiocination Sir Robert Peel differs widely from the habits of anxious inquirers after truth. The latter shun every suspicion of having strayed into the course alluded to; they feel a delicate alarm, lest they should bear unfairly on their opponent, and are careful to put

their own views broadly forward, that there may be no possibility of mistaking them. It is not in their nature or plan, to take advantages, and they are as it were over nice in their apprehension, that their antagonist should neglect those which fairly belong to him. They are like the high-minded chess or card player, who, looking for success to his own superiority, and not to the blunders of others, will kindly point to mistakes or omissions, upon which tricksters would seize with avidity and pleasure.

When suspicion is once alive, faith in authority rapidly declines. If any one will but go carefully through Sir Robert's speech, he will find himself in that predicament, and the Letters of Diogenes are not calculated to lessen wholesome distrust. Should they induce inquirers to seek for further information in the pages of the great men who have treated of political science (and who will remain great notwithstanding Sir Robert's sneers), my object will have been gained; there is no fear, but that whoever once sets fairly about inquiry, is a recruit, on the point of enlisting in our ranks*.

I could not well avoid making use, in these letters, of what may appear harsh language, but the Right Honourable Baronet himself is not very chary on this point; and I mean to say, that he has damaged himself materially by the gloating delight with which, under the pretence of attacking an individual (Mr. Hume) he has resuscitated the stale, exploded, vulgar, and futile trick,

* Perhaps on political economy, no work is more entertaining and instructive, and therefore more suitable to beginners, than that of Jean Baptiste Say. I have earned the thanks of many people, who, reading it on my recommendation, were converted into supporters of the doctrines of free trade.

of disparaging the whole race of political philosophers, or, if he will, Economists—men, of whom it may most truly be said, that they have brought down wisdom from heaven, and fixed her in the abodes of mortals—men, illustrious for the zeal and disinterestedness with which they have applied the highest sciences to the relief of the evils under which (we must be wilfully blind not to see it) poor humanity still labours to an alarming and lamentable extent. With this aggressive part of Sir Robert's Speech, daily twice or three times under my eyes, fine phrases seemed impossible, mincing language became childish, and the ordinary courtesies were perfectly supererogatory. To suit my words to the occasion appeared an indispensable duty.

But I must acknowledge that I feel some compunctions for having, in my censure of the abominable uses to which Sir Robert Peel puts statistical statements (and which afford an instructive instance of the abuse which has frequently been made of them), indulged in certain strictures which I might almost wish to erase from the Letters of Diogenes. The gentleman at the head of the statistical department of the treasury, and many members of the statistical society, are men of singularly enlarged minds and pure and benevolent intentions, and with them statistics are so entirely the handmaiden of higher purposes, that I must concede to them the right to address me, as Kent is addressed in Lear—"Why, what a monstrous fellow thou art, thus to rail at us, that are neither known of thee, nor know thee!" Many persons, however, and Sir Robert Peel among the rest, seem to confound statistics with political econo-

my, whereas these two branches of political science, differ at least as widely as the dictionary of a language from its grammar.

It may be asked, what system of Corn Laws I advocate, and to this question I emphatically answer, none! After a dispassionate and diligent inquiry, extended over fully a quarter of a century, I am quite sure that none is necessary, and therefore, that every one is bad! The object of such laws is invariably to curtail the supply of food, on the *vulgar*, but erroneous supposition, that there is either *too much*, or at all events *enough*: *such a state of things has, however, never yet existed.*

If I am asked again, what I would advocate as second best to no Corn Law, I should certainly say a small fixed duty, not for protection (for it is no protection, neither is any required), but to silence prejudices, or to increase the revenue. The latter object, whilst duties are levied on sugar, coffee, tea, and many other commodities which have gradually become necessities of life, may palliate a slight departure from a strictly sound course; and if the general principle be but agreed on, details may be left to the settlement of expediency and mutual concession. It should, however, not be forgotten, that every duty on corn has a tendency to add to the undue preponderance of the proprietors of the soil and to foster oligarchy, which threatens ultimate subversion to the political edifice.

The attempt to rule the trade in food (which ought to constitute one-half of all commerce) by the present system, is an outrage on common sense and the age;

it is also quite inefficient for the purposes which it was intended to accomplish, and Sir Robert Peel's declaration in its favour fixes his pretensions to the art of governing (I can hardly say the science of government, for of that he seems to know nothing,) very low. He is in fact perfectly ignorant of the working of the system.

Let me tell him, that the sliding rule is in a peculiar sense "the *speculators'* law," and an infamous instrument for fraud on an enormous scale. It reminds one forcibly of the false oaths, simulated papers, and other wholesale iniquities, which in many instances degraded the mercantile profession during the late war from an high and honourable pursuit, to one full of deception, fraud, forgery, and debasing trickery. Great political measures shape the moral temperament of whole generations, and there are not a few who have reason to regret, that their youth fell on a period so frightfully fatal to a pure and honourable habit of trade*!

* The Morning Chronicle of the 20th April 1840, gives the following instance of the operations of corn speculators :—"The average price," it says, "was, in London, on the

25th March . . . 72s. 10d.

31st March . . . 68s. 10d.

7th April . . . 66s. 5d.

14th April . . . 72s. 4d.

"Now the two low weeks originated in a quantity of Irish and Scotch wheat, sold in Mark-lane at 44s. à 46s. not for human food, but for pigs and poultry uses. This having ceased, the averages got up, although the general prices have fallen."—"In Bristol, last week, 1000 Barrels of Irish wheat were returned at 25s. per barrel; they were bought at this price, free on board, in Ireland; they will appear in the averages as 600 quarters at 42s. and thus the duty on human food is now regulated by the price of that for swine!"

Modifications of this absurd system will no doubt be proposed by many a state quack, and perhaps meet the support of some well-meaning and sensible men. In proportion as they will approximate the corn trade to a state of perfect freedom, or a low fixed duty, objections to them would diminish, but so would also the pretext for their necessity. Until it shall have been boldly proclaimed by the legislature, that all such restraints are absurd, there will remain something rotten in our commercial policy; when that principle shall have been generally admitted, this silly contrivance will not trouble us much longer.

In my Letters I found it impossible to avoid a frequent recurrence to some points; and others, though it was my wish to pass in review every important item in political science bearing on the question of the Corn Law, have been neglected; to one of these I must still refer. When the object of a law is to control something, say *price*, we ought to know what it is that is to be so controlled. Price consists of several elements, amongst which the proportion which the quantity of a commodity bears to that of the precious metals stands most prominent; but population, national habits, new inventions, and a variety of other circumstances, as variable in their nature as in their number, are mixed up with it. Reason, as well as history, teaches us, that fifty shillings may be an extremely low, or an outrageously high price for wheat—but which, who can know? In these words, “*who can know*,” much of the mischief of legislative interference in matters of this kind, is to be sought. It interferes in the dark, or, at best, on the

evidence of past occurrences, which afford no clue to the hidden future.

It will be said, that the laws may be altered to meet the new emergency. No doubt they may, as they have been altered twenty times before, but when? When the mischief has been done—when difficulties and dangers intrude themselves amongst the highest ranks of society, the legislating classes—when the middling classes can no longer bear the pressure—when, in fact, the lower classes have undergone years of suffering, and their numbers have been decimated by calamities! In the annals of history, two or three years seem but a point, and though millions may have perished, the short words “much distress amongst the poor,” will be found abundantly comprehensive for the graphic pencil of the historian, to chronicle the sad tale of a decennium of wretchedness, struggling, and deprivation, such as we witness in our own days. And who will say that we are not now, even now, in a transition period, where the proportion of the precious metals or other circumstances would justify 30s. rather than 90s. as the proper price for wheat, and that the present struggle will not be justly recorded by future writers as an insane attempt, parallel to some effort to keep cotton at 2s. the pound, or manufactured goods at the tenfold value which they bore twenty years ago? I ask again, *who can know?* Who then would charge his conscience with having assisted in upholding a contrivance like the Corn Law, which may at this very moment disarrange every natural course of events, and, in the interim to our arriving at a better knowledge, inflict a world of hardships,

which hereafter we may all find to have been perfectly uncalled for ?

Oh that every one would consider it a solemn duty to understand these matters ! Then we should, although still subject to many ills flesh is heir to, escape at least that part, and a very large one it is, which can be traced to useless legislation, to unnecessary interference, to all sorts of restrictions and prohibitions, but above all to the Corn Law.

Amongst all the thousand legislative experiments with which our state doctors have quacked nations, one has never yet been tried—THAT OF LEAVING US ALONE. The business of Government ought to be protection from foreign aggression and domestic violence, the perfect administration of the laws in public courts, and the education of the people. Security, justice, and knowledge, should occupy the entire energies of our rulers, and the result would be a vast diminution of jobbing, dishonesty, and trickery, together with the vices and crimes which fiscal regulations have called into existence, and which, like all other trespasses, lead to a thousand fresh departures from upright and honourable conduct in the ordinary affairs of life. We should then have an era of simplicity and ease as yet unknown in the management of public affairs, securing wealth, prosperity, and tranquillity to individuals and to the state, and laying the best foundations of human happiness and national greatness. Had but half the waste of mental power and material treasure of our Custom-house philosophers, been devoted to the improvement of civil law and general education, what would Great Britain now be ?

—A heaven on earth! What its people?—Men, philosophers, Christians, in the truest sense of the words.

I cannot conclude without adding my sincere thanks to the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle* for the ready insertion of the communications of an unknown correspondent; and, in the earnest hope that my endeavours may contribute to the accomplishment of the consummation most devoutly to be wished, THE TOTAL ABOLITION OF THE CORN LAW, I consign to the serious attention of an intelligent public, the letters of

DIOGENES.

London, 24th August 1841.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

SIR,

May 14, 1841.

By means of the Corn Laws you grasp at, and, for aught I know, you may succeed in holding the helm of State! Looking at your speech of 1839 on this mighty question, I can comprehend the great chancellor's dictum—"Behold, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed!" Capacities which might grace a special pleader at the Old Bailey, are to govern a great empire! Such capacities you must be allowed to possess, and your speech of 1839 shall justify the assertion.

Returns for a couple of years of the Savings-banks of Manchester and Glasgow satisfy you of the abundance of food!—as if you would wait till the nation were one general community of paupers, before you saw reasons for suspecting the existence of want and suffering! Tables from the Custom-house, cunningly culled for your purpose by some sycophantic aspirant to a clerkship, but so clumsily done, that by slight additions, they prove the very contrary of your case, are the statistics with which you satisfy your conscience and your supporters; as if the triumph of one evening could outweigh the judgment of a Smith, a Say, a Ricardo; as if figures could assuage the cravings of a wretched multitude; as if the world, posterity, the British empire, some thirty years hence, would take note of the flimsy statements on which you rest your claims as a legislator, and stake your reputation as a statesman!

Arraign yourself before futurity!—ask seriously whether

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curses or blessings must then be your portion, and you will perhaps pause! At all events, you will bestow more thought and labour on this mighty matter, than would suffice for a turnpike or railroad bill. Think of the awful hour, when your birth, your wealth, your station, your talents, shall be thrown in the scale; when you will have to balance them with the results they yielded to your country and to mankind! Will your majorities then avail? Will your ingenious pleadings save you? Will distorted facts, and the juggle of neatly-contrived rows of figures, beguile the councils of the Eternal? This is not a trivial question, for you are playing with the weal and woe of millions—you are moulding the character, the habits, and morals of nations, and sowing the seed of good or evil for ages to come! What will not be asked of you, to whom so much was entrusted?

I have addressed you as a man—now I will speak to you as a statesman. Is it the present alone, or is it not chiefly the future with which you ought to deal? Can the system last for ever? Though thirty millions may eke out subsistence from the yielding of your scanty acres, will forty, will fifty millions be able to do it? Must the change, now so dexterously opposed by you and yours, not unavoidably occur at some future period? Will not the difficulties accumulate—their solution be more perplexing, the longer you defer the settlement? Will not contending interests beget irreconcilable parties in the state? Will not wretchedness and discontent on one side—wealth and habitual monopoly on the other—become specific and solid antagonist principles, brooding civil war—maturing revolution? and will not disorder and ruin—will not the sword have to cut the Gordian knot, which an act of Parliament might now untie?

You are no statesman! A statesman would look around him—he would also look a-head. He would behold steam, education, and temperance, stalking abroad with giant strides. He would see the new spirit which mechanical contrivances, knowledge, and moral improvement are rapidly generating. An

ardour hitherto unknown—enthusiasm aspiring to martyrdom—agitation promoted with undying perseverance—these are in motion!—these are training to manhood a population of a different stamp from your hangers-on!—these are instilling political knowledge more comprehensive and far superior to what is set forth on this great argument in your speech of 1839! What is taught and learnt weekly, daily, nay, hourly, of the Corn Laws, their origin, their drift, and their issue—of scarcity and of abundance—of high and low prices—of rent, of labour, of wages, of money, of capital, of taxation, of foreign commerce, of free-trade, of commercial legislation, of custom-house and diplomatic humbug, of wealth, rank, and station, of poverty, wretchedness, and poor-houses, of savings-banks, and of your statistical statements—with much beside—I will fully detail to you in my next. Enough for to-day.

I have the honour to be, SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

DIOGENES.

LETTER II.

SIR,

May 20, 1841.

Rules, regulations, and restraints, have ever been the hobby of legislators, the self-inflicted task of governments, the mighty business of men in office. Conscience, thought, speech, writing, and printing—building, travelling—fishing, and shooting—acts, nameless because of their number or their nature, have been subjected to official sway! To such a climax had this puny wisdom arrived, that the Earl of Ripon, as Mr. Robinson, upon introducing his first great batch of liberal measures, stated that he found, when coming into office, upwards of *eighteen hundred* Acts of Parliament referring to trade; that it would take at least three lives of ordinary duration to read—but the age of Methuselah to digest and understand them.

The commerce with foreign countries had obtained a large

proportion of such legislative folly. The wisdom of our ancestors had bequeathed us the absurd notion of a balance of trade. The Treasury and Custom-house shelves groaned under loads of statutes which were meant to enrich the nation, by checking the receipt of commodities from abroad. The ministers made annually their boast, which the legislators applauded and the multitude rejoiced to hear, that the nation had got riches, because forty millions' worth of goods had been received by merchants from abroad, in return for fifty millions' worth sent away. This difference they called a gain, and the greater it was, the more used Mr. Vansittart and his predecessors to glory! According to their principles, the surest road to national wealth would have been to send abroad every thing produced in Great Britain, and to take nothing whatsoever in return! Absurd as this now seems, long habit of false reasoning, national prejudice, and a singular want of distrust of official quackery, had made those notions part and parcel of the political creed; and the opposite position that nations, like individuals, could only get rich by their returns exceeding their outgoings, would have sent him who maintained it to an asylum as a fool, if not to gaol as a traitor!

That selfishness and cunning should have begot the Corn Law out of such ignorance and general blindness need not surprise us; but that, after Mr. Robinson and Mr. Huskisson had sanctioned, from their high stations, the true principles of national economy, the people should have tamely submitted to the refined intricacy and cruelty of the last Corn Law, with its averages, inspectors, frauds, and cruelties, will hereafter be looked upon as a singular phenomenon—an extraordinary instance of indifference to their own interests—of submission to folly and injustice when established by law! That some hundred corn inspectors should weekly, like whilom the servants of the Inquisition in Spain, sneak and sniff about amongst the people in the public places—that they should mark, register, and report the dealings of every market—that they, with their Grand Inquisitor as Inspector General, should have the power

to apportion the supplies of food, almost as good to them may seem—and that a nation of freemen should put up with such trifling, such folly, such tyranny, will in after ages seem impossible. In your famous speech of 1839, you appeal to the averages of 1838, and state them to have been 54s. for ten years; but I say, that in that year 1838, when the new crop had been harvested in a wretched state, and was unfit for food—when all the old stocks had been exhausted, and wholesome bread-corn could hardly be got at 80s.—at that critical moment, the difference of *one halfpenny in the averages* enabled these inspectors to keep half a million of quarters of sound foreign wheat for a whole week intact in the bonded warehouses! Why did not the people carry these petty inquisitors of the belly, tarred and feathered, to the House of Commons, because of that halfpenny, which forced them to eat your most unwholesome, most poisonous, and most perilous bread-stuff? Tarred and feathered, as I live and write, shall the fellows one of these days be paraded before your greedy, grasping, monopolising set. This is what we now teach our children, with every morsel of bread we give them. A halfpenny in the quarter! Averages! Of what consolation was it to the hungry brats of the poor in September 1838, with bad bread at the enormous price of 11d. the loaf (or fully one day's labour of a hale man), that the average from the 30th of September 1830, to the 30th of September 1838, was 54s.? Average prices—average fools! We want average quantities for our bellies, and it shall go hard but we will teach the coming generation to get them. Lest that memorable week in 1838, when one halfpenny the quarter in your averages obliged the people to eat poisonous bread for a whole week should be forgotten, I will furnish the date and all the particulars in my next. Enough for to-day.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

DIOGENES.

LETTER III.

SIR,

May 21, 1841.

In the memorable week ending the 7th of September of the year 1838, the last of those eight years of which you give us so satisfactory an account of the average of the wheat prices, which was, as you say, only 54s. and odd pence, the returned price was 72s. 11½d. The best old wheat sold at 86s. the quarter, but the whole quantity of foreign wheat cleared for consumption up to that day during the year was only 15,475 quarters, at the four chief ports. The quality of the crop just housed, was cold, damp, scarce half made up, and unfit for human food. The lowest quality of Irish was quoted at only 32s, flour had risen to 70s the sack; yet, because of this halfpenny, we had to wait another week for relief! At last the corn inquisitors (whom I trust still to send tarred and feathered over the land, and whom I wish to substitute for Guy Fawkes, on our future 5th of Novembers, if our training of the rising generation but succeed) got rid of the last halfpenny, and supplies of good foreign wheat poured in at the following rate, viz. :—

By the 14th Sept, duty was paid on 223,542 quarters.

21st 825,057 "

28th 1,017,784 "

In your speech of 1839, you say "that the argument from individual cases of suffering is not conclusive; but the parents of three millions of children in that memorable week, argued very conclusively, as they sliced off with a murmuring groan, somewhat between a sigh and a curse, for their young ones the miserable pittance of bread. Bread, did I say?—a filthy compound of bad flour, beans, bones, alum, and, perchance, plaster of Paris, or what else legislative wisdom has taught the baker to substitute for the abundance of wholesome bread-stuff, with which a beneficent Providence made the earth so plentifully to teem. I repeat it, the parents of millions of children argued cogently and conclusively, that but for this one

halfpenny above mentioned, their sufferings, and those of their brats, would have been less poignant. "Peculiar cases of individual suffering," you blandly say in your speech. Very peculiar cases indeed, when one halfpenny in seventy-three shillings——. Oh that I had the brazen tongue of the great trump, I would blast this halfpenny everlastingly into the ears of the "selfish tyrants, who fatten on the labours and sufferings of the exhausted poor !" (for this sentence in your speech I give you due credit)—I would drown your senses with millions of individual cases of distress, "calculated" (an excellent word) —"calculated," as you say, "to awaken your deepest sympathy." A very average sort of sympathy, I guess, which says to a poisoned and starving population—Wait another week ; poison yourselves a little longer ; comfort yourselves with the hope of the additional halfpenny in the returns ; don't mind starving for a fortnight ; make your calculations, accommodate your appetites, tune your stomachs to a larger scale. Average them over the years 1830 to 1839 ; was not the price during that period 54s. and so many pence ? and if you would but multiply the price with the quantity, and divide the sum total with your appetite, the result will square exactly with my averages. You will find my averages excellent ; at one time the quantity was large, and the price small ; and now it is much the same, only the price is large and the quantity small ! The averages are most excellent averages !

But, say the squalling starvelings to their parents, we were not born when the averages were so kind to little children, and gave them those large pieces of bread ! What good does it to us, that they now make them so small ? Next week is a long way off ; we are so hungry, we don't like to wait. Where do these gentlemen, the averages, live ? Is Sir Robert Peel one of them ? Are his knobs of bread as small and as bad as ours ? Has he any little children, and do they pine and hunger as we do ? Does he stint himself of his allowance, as you do, that mother and we may have another mouthful ? Does he look as sick and lean as you ? Hold your d——d prattle, mutters the

man, maddened with anguish : he looks as sleek and fat as a prize ox—he need not belt his belly and tighten his guts, be the averages high or low !—Pardon, Sir, the vulgar language these people use. 'Tis low, I grant you, and unfit for your ears ; but their feelings are no less acute, and their appetites, withal, somewhat sharper than yours or mine.

When Mr. Robinson proposed to reduce the duty on foreign iron, an iron master, and an alderman to boot, said that he was for free trade in the abstract, only iron he must except, and if the Chancellor of the Exchequer should persevere, he would predict that no more iron would be made in Great Britain. At that time the annual produce was three hundred thousand tons. The Chancellor of the Exchequer persevered, and the production of British iron—fell off? By no means ; it rapidly augmented ; and in the year 1840 it rose to about a million and a half of tons, being in sixteen years a fivefold increase. So much for the predictions of practical men, and the advocates of monopoly ! But then we have had the railroads, of which no one thought. Precisely so ; and who knows what railroad will be discovered between the teeth and the belly ?—what increased consumption will follow upon increased supply ?—what will be the difference, when, instead of starving averages, competition, unlimited competition—that great, that chief, that unfailing means of plenty, shall rule the victualling department of the people ?

This great principle, competition, deserves a letter of its own, and I mean to write it. Enough for to-day.

I have the honour to be, yours, most obediently,

DIOGENES.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

May 27, 1841.

The other day I heard the boatswain on board of one of her Majesty's steam frigates say of a smart youth, who was

briskly pacing the deck—"Now, if that chap were ordered down to h—ll, to fetch up Old Nick, he'd go, and, by Jove, he'd bring him!" On inquiry, I found this to be the youngster who, together with an Austrian midddy, ran in the teeth of the Egyptian guns to fetch the English standard, left by accident on the gate of a fort near Beyrout, and our Englishman won the race, and carried off the standard! Now, I doubt not but he would have done the same thing had he been alone; but I do think that he ran somewhat more nimbly, and showed somewhat more pluck, because of his German competitor—for competition is the delight of an Englishman, and an element of success.

Surely we should laugh at a man for telling us that foreigners had more capital, more skill, more industry, more perseverance, to bring to any enterprise than Englishmen. Yet has the legislature taught men in every trade, in every manufacture, in every profession, to call for, and to rely on legislative protection, and to assume, *a priori*, that, without it, they could not compete with foreigners! Is not this simply nonsense?

If we apply the test of reason to agriculture, and inquire under what conditions it ought to thrive, we find that they comprehend land, capital, climate, labourers, manure, roads, implements of husbandry, and markets for the disposal of the produce. Now, capital is more abundant in England than elsewhere; the climate enables men to work here more days in the year, and more hours in the day, in the open air, than in any other country; it also favours the culture of an infinite variety of products, as well as the growth of more than one crop in the twelvemonth. English labourers are well known to be doubly as efficient as foreigners; manure, on account of the crowded towns and villages, and the immense quantity of live stock, is abundant; roads are nowhere so fine, and their cost is amply compensated by the saving of time, labour, and wear and tear. Agricultural implements are cheap, and of good workmanship; and, as regards the ready sale of produce, surely this country is unrivalled, markets being every where close at hand; and the

demand is so various, that everything, animal or vegetable, corn or straw, chaff or bran, grass or turnips, finds buyers, and nothing need be wasted. Yet we are told that no British farmer can compete with foreigners, and that without the Corn Laws "England would soon be a waste, intersected by a few railroads, connecting a dull succession of manufacturing towns with each other." This is to take place, as some people say, on account of the taxes; but I undertake to prove, that in what affects the cost of production, England is the least taxed country in Europe, and the farmers the least taxed class in England. Others speak of the poor-rates; but if the whole amount were paid (which it is not) by the farmer, it would not come to sixpence in the pound on the produce of the land; besides, the poor are not suffered to starve in other countries. Then there is the rent—ah, there's the rub! for who would not shuffle off this execrable Corn Law, could I but prove that that would raise rents? Leaving this item out of view, at least for the present, it can be easily shown that the fear of foreign competition is a phantom; that like our two heroes at Beyrout, the English and foreign farmers may well run an honourable race, but that the former will rather be the foremost; that competition will sharpen their wits—teach them to rely on their own exertions—break them of those habits, which you so well define in your speech of 1839, namely, "want of education"—"not being men of business"—"being apt to make engagements which are very unwise"—"being willing to agree to any terms which landlords may propose;"—in short, competition will be to them as the tree of knowledge, making them ashamed of their ignorance and their sluggish reliance on Corn Laws, and sicken them of their slavish dependence on the owners of the soil.

In examining the averages of 1838, which in 1839 you proclaim to have been so satisfactory—those averages, which, being one halfpenny under 73s. on the 7th of September, forced the people to continue poisoning themselves for another

week with the most unfit bread-stuff ever grown, I find that the returned prices had advanced, without intermission, from the beginning of the year, and that on the 17th of August they had reached 69s. 2d. At this juncture, had justice and mercy held the sway, an order in council ought to have done away with the infamous regulations at one fell swoop. Your excellent averages, high as they were, were in fact 10s. too low, because of the wretched quality of the Corn, most of which being unfit even for cattle and swine, was nevertheless returned as bread-corn, and served as the standard by which to dole out food to a whole people ! Now you must either have been aware of this or not. If you knew of this infamous state of things, this pressing necessity for old foreign Wheat, to mix with the wet and unwholesome English produce—more especially, if you were aware of the horrible circumstances attending the one-halfpenny week, this most refined, diabolical cruelty—this legislative mockery—this starving, as it were in sport, thousands, and poisoning millions, you ought not, as a wise and an honest man, to have approved of the system ! It must have been the subtlety of an Old Bailey pleader, which enabled you to “dish up for the house” (an art which Lord Stanley says you understand so well) your case in these words : —“ But when the pressure came, was there any serious difficulty in procuring the requisite supply.” Surely there was the difficulty of the bad quality keeping down the averages, and the never-to-be-forgotten halfpenny !

But if you did not know what had been going on in that terrible year, then, I say, fie upon your ignorance ! fie upon your presumption ! fie upon your statesmanship ! Attempt no longer to rule nations, and to sway the fate of present and future generations ! Redeem your error in defending a stupid, cruel, and wicked law, the workings of which you do not understand, by resigning yourself to a befitting obscurity, and proclaim to the world your bitter repentance, and give a lasting lesson, by means of self-inflicted humiliation, as the only

amends you are capable of making for the mischief and misery which you have occasioned and countenanced.

Thus much for this day.

I am, SIR, your most obedient servant,
DIOGENES.

LETTER V.

SIR,

June 7, 1841.

In the autumn of 1838, when, owing to the bad quality of English corn, no wholesome bread could be got—when the relief which the admission of foreign wheat would have afforded was impeded, because stuff not fit for dogs was included in the averages, which rule the supply of the people's food—when the diabolical farce of the averages being one halfpenny minus of seventy-three shillings, retarded, at the moment of extreme pressure, the much-wanted relief for another week—I say, in that memorable autumn, several good-natured people proposed to regulate the wages of labour according to the fluctuations in the prices of bread-stuffs. They thought that a general agreement could secure higher wages to the labourer, if prices (which were then nearly at the highest) should advance still further.

I wrote forthwith a letter to the editor of the *Mark-lane Express*, an agricultural paper, filled with such proposals, and told him that scarcity must cause a fall of wages—that no human power could prevent this fall, because it was in the nature of things; that it never had been otherwise, and that I challenged his correspondents to furnish a well-authenticated instance of a general rise of wages succeeding one or more bad crops! My letter was readily inserted in the paper, but no answer to my challenge appeared; and it is notorious, that since that period, the deterioration of wages, and of the condition of the labouring classes, have but too abundantly verified my prediction.

If scarcity of food could improve wages and the condition of the people, then famine would advance both to an extreme de-

gree ; then, to secure to the labouring classes large payment and permanent well-being, it would only be requisite to destroy annually half the crops, or even more ; then bad seasons would be a blessing, and abundance a curse ! Blockheads as the common people have hitherto been, they are no longer such jolter-heads as to believe theories so absurd, and propositions so manifestly stupid.

Possibly you, who, in the climax of clap-trap oratory, with which you rounded off your speech of 1839, threaten us with "*a dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railways, intersecting the abandoned tracts which it will be no longer profitable to cultivate,*" hold this notion, that times of distress are times of general well-being ; and your reasoning must be as follows :—Let scarcity and dearness of the necessaries of life be but sufficiently lasting and severe, and, by destroying a large proportion of the labourers, they must secure high wages for the remainder ! Let misery and wretchedness have time to do their work well ! Let starvation check marriages, and famine stifle the new-born offspring ! Let hunger blight budding childhood, and disease speed the decay of age ! Let want and penury hasten the despatch of the weak, the sickly, the least vigorous in mind and body, and call in, prematurely, death—

"The poor man's dearest friend,

His surest and his last !"

to rid us of those who, according to some philosophers, have no business to live at all, and then the small band of survivors may have their own price ! Kill off, and that rapidly, a goodly lot of the existing race of labourers, and then the remaining few may ask, and will extort higher wages ! Sir, through the portals of death lies the vista of improvement, which scarcity and dearness, which high prices, which your reasoning opens to the multitude. Rules, restrictions, and averages are the nostrums of our state quacks, and the Corn Law is the murderous compound of the Eadys and Morrisons of St. Stephens*, who have

* Since then, it would seem, Sir Robert Peel has set up in a more regular way of business

turned the country into a great hospital for fools, and pinch the people in strait jackets, because they prove lunatic on one point—too insane and too weak to burst the *halfpenny button* which confines them.

We hear and read a *vast deal* about high and low prices, and high and low wages, which seems *vastly* nonsensical. What we want is a *vast* deal of food—a constant, large, overwhelming supply of wholesome food, and then every rational and industrious man will manage to get his full share of it. We want abundance! Abundance is wealth, and results from free and unbounded competition, that great means of civilization—the cause of that vast heap of luxuries, comforts, and conveniences piled up around us—and why not of necessities? By what charter does legislative folly meddle with the latter? Turbot and lobsters it will have, without duties and without averages, as the Corn Law lecturers have proclaimed all over the country, long before my Lord Radnor told you of it; but the poor man's quartern loaf, be it ever so small, or ever so dear, must not be improved by a single grain of Foreign wheat, until the last halfpenny in the accursed averages has been extorted, according to the precise rules of political quackery! It sickens me to proceed! Enough for to-day.

DIOGENES.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

June 11, 1841.

In the climax with which you wind up your speech of 1839, you "dish up to the house" (which, as Lord Stanley says, you know so well how to do), in a sort of bombastic oratory, all the vulgar fears and prejudices which it is common to see, in one shape or other, marshalled against every kind of improvement. Since the beginning of time, weak minds have predicted the most direful consequences from man's attempts to obtain free scope for invention and enterprise, and when you

shadow forth to your gaping majorities the "phantom" of a *dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railroads, intersecting the abandoned tracts which it would be no longer profitable to cultivate*, you repeat what fools and old women have told, whether mankind, in the wonderful advance from brutality to civilization, introduced a new bodkin, or discovered a new planet!—printed books, or ploughed the ocean!

The kick which you thus give to manufacturing towns, reminds me of the beetle who sprung from the dunghill; the holding out railroads as the destroyers of agriculture, shows that you shut your eyes when you come from Tamworth to Town. Are not the large towns the chief consumers of the produce of the land? Have not the railroads turned the barren heaths into fertile fields? Do not thousands of cheerful cottages, surrounded by neat gardens, spring up along every line? Did you never hear of Chat Moss, which the Manchester and Liverpool Railroad has changed from a forlorn wilderness into a smiling plain?

Whilst I see railroads advance cultivation with railroad speed and energy, you predict that they will make it "recede from the hill-top," which it has climbed under the influence of two hundred years' protection!—A capital metaphor, emblematical of your mind, your statesmanship, and the empire of monopoly over which it is your ambition to hold sceptred sway! The hill-top! By your system, cultivation climbs up the toilsome, ungenial, narrow hill-top—and then—it stops! for whither advance from the hill-top? Thus far, and no farther, has ever been the watchword of puny intellects! The present state of things is the utmost their little mind can encompass! This is the hill-top to which they have toiled, and every advance beyond it is an impossibility to their shackled understanding and their barren imagination! With the assistance of two hundred years' protection, you help cultivation up the hill-top; with two years of railroading, I fix her in the wide-spreading extent beneath, visible to all but one-eyed self-interest, and greedy, grasping monopoly!

By the aid of the Corn Law, you expect to prevent the growth of "a dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railways," as you have it in your speech. Wicked and vain is your expectation ! Railways and manufacturing towns do not spring up by magic ; they require the existence of large quantities of materials, wherewith to build and establish them, and of large numbers of hands, multitudes of labourers fit to work and in want of sustenance and employment. If, then, you really succeed in preventing the "dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns connected by railways," you prevent enormous masses of people from earning their sustenance, and enormous quantities of materials from being put to appropriate uses. You waste, in fact, enormous quantities of property, and you starve enormous multitudes of workmen, if your policy be as effective as you contemplate ! Alas that it should come to this !—that man should arraign to himself the office of Providence !—that he should dare to ape the Almighty Power which disposes of life and death—which rules the seasons and the circling year—which sends destruction from the volcano, and makes the earth quake, as if it were a weak reed—which ruins as it saves !—that man should dare to deal out death to thousands, disease and misery to millions, lest "a dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railroads," should mar his prospect, reduce his rental, or shear him of his little brief authority.

Yet, do not fondly believe that you will succeed. You may stifle the birth of a coming generation, and kill off the present, but the mighty triumph of mind over matter will overcome your efforts. You may beguile your conscience, and delude your reason with the intoxicating influence of parliamentary majorities ; but man dies, whilst mankind lives ; you must depart, but the people remain ! You may make a law, and in your conceit, as you express it, "throw the fate of nations into the lottery of legislation ;" but the prize of freedom must come up, now or hereafter. To this it must come at last ! Weak men have at all times, and in all places, spent their little ener-

gies to stem the irresistible rotation of events. They cling in the spokes of the mighty wheel; but it whirls them along, and hurls them into the onward torrent! Fools, content with the schooling they have learnt, oppose innovation, lest they should have to recommence their learning,—but what avails their opposition? Behold, everything has changed before they open their mouths to inquire what innovations are projected. Encyclopædias are written to fix the limits of arts and sciences; dictionaries are composed by academies, to settle the meaning of words, and the sense of language; but, before they are finished, supplements become necessary, to proclaim that art and language have equally altered, and that nothing human is permanent! To-day constitutions and laws are decreed,—lo! to-morrow sees them vanish from among the people, and the wisdom of one hour is the derision of the next! Yet will man meddle with every thing, and rule the actions of myriads of minds, as if they were the strings of a lute; measure out the food of thirty millions of people to the accuracy of a scruple, by an average of one halfpenny in 73s., though he load his conscience with the murder of thousands and the poisoning of millions; prevent the growth of “dull successions of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railroads;” though, to effect his purpose, he must starve enormous multitudes of his fellow-men, and stifle whole generations, that still sleep in the womb of time. Man, who knows not what to-morrow—what the next hour will bring forth, will venture to do all this; and you are the man! I shudder to think of it; but you will not succeed. Thus much for to-day.

DIOGENES.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

June 14, 1841.

When, in the session of 1839, you committed the supply of food for the thirty millions composing this great na-

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tion, for a further period of two years "to the lottery of legislation," as you aptly express it, you, fortunately, printed your speech, and every one may buy it for half-a-crown, at Mr. Murray's, in Albemarle-street.

In that speech you dwell with much satisfaction on your own statistical statements, and ridicule the fears of others that the Corn Laws must deteriorate the condition of the working classes—that they must derange commercial dealings—that "by the suddenness of demand for foreign corn, when the pressure does arise, the risk of derangement of the currency and stoppage of payment by the bank is incurred,"—and you sneer more specifically with infinite self-complacency at the *apprehensions* of Mr. Philips, the member for Manchester, "for the future stability of our manufacturing and commercial prosperity," of which you dispose as "*predictions without argument, and apprehensions not sustained by official returns,*" and therefore "*not conclusive.*" Alas, how is it now with your official statements, and the apprehensions and predictions of Mr. Philips and others!

Preston, from whence you exhibited a letter, "especially calculated to mitigate the apprehensions on this head"—Preston has now 1600 houses untenanted, and factory upon factory closed. Leeds, with 3500 houses, Sheffield, with 2000, besides many warehouses, shut up,—Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Bradford, all involved in the general chaos of ruin,—do they not proclaim indubitable tidings of "deterioration of the working classes," and "derangement of commercial dealings?" Do they not confirm but too unquestionably that the apprehensions and predictions of Mr. Philips were entitled to more respect than the arguments and official documents with which you supported your shallow pleadings?

If statistical documents could be prepared of the privations and miseries endured by the working classes since you made your speech; if official returns could be laid on the table of manufacturers ruined, artisans heart-broken, habitations deserted, chambers stripped of furniture, pawnbrokers overwhelmed with pledges, families degraded to pauperism and vice, poorhouses

crowded, hospitals thronged, jails crammed—shame and disgrace must be your portion, pretending, in 1839, to political foresight, and amusing your parliamentary audience with stories about *mousetraps* (as Nero fiddled, when Rome was burning)—whilst dire calamity, lurking at your heels, *within two short years*, in scornful derision of your political arithmetic, broke through every floodgate of safety, and verified to the utmost those apprehensions and predictions, which, because unsupported by documents, you fancied you could dispel with the magic of a supercilious sneer! Oh for the “lottery of legislation!” Within the brief space elapsed since your speech of 1839, the whole monetary system has been entirely deranged; the Bank has been twice within a few days of suspending payments; more than half our merchants have been on the verge of bankruptcy; the working classes have been, God knows, sufficiently deteriorated; the most solid interests have been shaken to the very foundation; and the dice-box of desperate enterprise, the offspring of your lottery of legislation, gambling on the people’s wretchedness—playing hazard with your halfpenny averages—has found the life and death of millions a legitimate and fertile mine for diabolical speculation and infamous profit!

The lottery of legislation! Truly, the Corn Law is such a lottery—a lottery full of blanks, and worse than blanks, for all but the landowners, “those selfish tyrants, fattening on the labours of the exhausted poor,” as you so wisely say; laws on such matters ever have been, and ever must be, lotteries, with this special advantage, that the law-makers may settle where the prizes shall fall. Have not rents risen ~~ven~~ since your speech of 1839, and how much since the law was enacted?

The rents are the prizes in this “lottery of legislation,” and if the landed proprietors were not “selfish tyrants, fattening on the labours of the poor,” they would offer, for the uses of the state, the surplus rents got by this “lottery of legislation;” they would disgorge the excess of income extorted by the Corn Laws, and eagerly cleanse themselves from the suspicion that, as managers of this great “lottery of legislation,” they had

distributed the tickets so dexterously and so dishonestly, that all the prizes must come to them, and all the blanks to the people. I would have you, who are so fond of statistical papers, call for detailed accounts of the past and present rents of the "selfish tyrants," lay on the table statistical returns of the revenues of the owners of the soil, exhibit a comparative view of the *deterioration* of landlords and of labourers, and I'll warrant that my arguments, "so fortified by official documents," will be found "conclusive, and entitled to the utmost respect."

Statistical accounts, no doubt, have their value ; but seeing that your triumphant resistance of inquiry into the Corn Law in 1839, when the tide of distress had fully set in, and was fast flooding to that extreme height which now fills every one with dismay, was based on such accounts, their value would appear to be indeed small. They are, in fact, the hobby of third-rate statesmen—the *idols of a calygraphic bureaucracy*—the pet bantling of little intellects, who know how to grapple with the multiplication table, and do not even suspect the existence of principles either in morals or politics ! Statistical statements are excellent instruments for gulling mankind, and puzzling unthinking men ; but in reality, even if accurately constructed, which they rarely are, or honestly applied—which was not the case with yours in 1839—they simply tell us what has been, but hardly justify any further conclusions*.

Tables of exports only prove that goods have been sent away, and no more : profit or loss may result from such exports, but that the tables cannot tell us. Tables of imports do not prove that merchants have gained, or that the country has been benefited. These are gratuitous conclusions, which may be well or ill-founded. A class, the receivers of rent, for instance, may have swallowed up the imports, whilst the people have gone to the poor-houses for shelter and sustenance. Even if such tables were to exhibit a general improvement, the question still remains, whether greater advance might not have occurred under different circumstances ?—whether if, notwith-

* See Preface.

standing, your squares and sliding rules, the body politic looks fair, it would not have looked fairer without them?—whether, in fact, though you prove most satisfactorily the excellency of your lottery of legislation, we should not have been all the better had it never been used for distributing food among the people?

In your speech¹ of 1839, you call for documents to prove fears and apprehensions. You say, show me that our lottery of legislation has deranged commerce—has deteriorated the working classes—has forced the Bank to suspend payment—has sown the seed of ruin in abundance, and has ripened a rich harvest of bankruptcy, wretchedness, pauperism, vice, crime, despair, disease, and death—of which my own tables say nothing; and then, when you support your apprehensions by such “*satisfactory statements*”—when you convince me by facts that your predictions were “entitled to the utmost respect,” (I am fond of using your own words) because efficient documents prove that the empire is shaken to its foundation, and the population steeped in misery—when you show us all this, I will concede a committee of inquiry—I will think of mending matters! In vulgar words, prove to me that the horse has been stolen, and I will try whether the stable-door ought not to be looked after.

Such is your reasoning, based on statistical documents; and truly may it be said, that

“If they always serve you thus,
You’ll find them but of little use.”

Had Satan himself laid a trap for you, it could not have been more complete than your speech of 1839, to which subsequent events have given, in every respect, the lie direct. When the poet drew up his sad catalogue of ills that besiege mankind,

“War, famine, pest, volcanoes, storm and fire,
Intestine broils!”

he should have added, statesmen, legislative lotteries, statistical documents, political arithmetic—or some term which my poor powers of language do not furnish me with, to express suitably a perfect compound of refined cruelty and fiendish wickedness—

of wholesale torture, diabolical craft, and asinine stupidity ; perhaps, "Corn Laws" might be the word ! Thus much for to-day.

DIOGENES.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

June 17, 1841.

Statistical accounts of your own country—though, as was the case with yours in 1839, events should belie the conclusions drawn from them, most speedily and most awfully—having proved so useful for gulling and plundering the community, statements, however stupid or mendacious, referring to foreign parts and distant empires, would naturally be still more convenient for the purposes of political humbuggery, because less liable to the test of examination and experience.

There is nothing unfair in the assumption, that the man, who, either from ignorance or deceit, asked, in 1839 (notwithstanding the difficulty of *the bad quality* of English keeping the averages in 1838 too low for the admission of foreign corn, and the never-to-be-forgotten halfpenny in 73s.) "when the time of pressure came, was there any *serious (!) difficulty* ?"—there is nothing unfair in the assumption, that, when dishing up your case for the house (which Lord Stanley says you know so well how to do), you would avail yourself of the popular fallacy, that the foreign grower "is free from the incumbrances of public and local taxes," whether you did, or did not know any thing about the taxation of other countries.

The accuracy of statements may well be questioned, when they tell us that wars of thirty years' duration, causing in the *best-regulated country* an enormous public debt, and a heavy amount of public and local taxes, have produced, with less favoured and worse-governed nations, an opposite, a most cheering result—a state of pristine happiness, and exemption from such "incumbrances."

Large fleets captured or destroyed, armies, to the number

of many millions of men, incessantly overrunning the vast area of the Continent, enormous quantities of materials and treasure squandered in preparing for, or in perpetrating the bloody process of destruction, the population nipped in the bud by the absorption of boys and youths to fill the ravages of marches, hospitals, and battles—public works neglected, roads ruined, industry and trade pressed into the miserable business of war, commerce reduced to smuggling, navigation annihilated, fields ravaged, crops devastated, cattle destroyed, human life disregarded, nations slaughtered, death indeed devouring “his thousands at a meal—” such was the sad portion of those whom you proclaim “free from the incumbrances of public and local taxation.” What conjurors they must have been! What a reflection upon the statesmen who ruled Great Britain all the while! Secure from most of these evils and losses, free from invasions, marches, counter-marches, sieges, and battles, safe in the pursuits of industry, of navigation, commerce, manufactures, and agriculture—bearing the “pomp,” but not suffering from the direful circumstances and afflictions of “war,” yet they loaded her with enormous debts and taxes, whilst the hundredfold suffering foreigners remained, as you say, “free from the incumbrances of public and local taxes!” Why not send for a few of these “Wizards in statesmanship,” to show you and others how such miracles can be performed?

In sober sadness, it is a discredit to your present reputation and future fame to garnish the case which you had to dish up for the house and the country, with such absurd, such vulgar fallacies! Had truth been your object, you would not have failed to discern that the war expenditure of the Continent must have been infinitely more costly; fair inquiry would have shown you, that taxation had been carried everywhere to the utmost; and you would have discovered, beyond that, immense burdens, not likely to be accurately registered in tables and records, but not on that account less destructive of wealth and productive power.

Expenditure, carefully determined upon, scrupulously con-

trolled, wisely applied, fairly registered, and honestly met, weighs less heavily, and impairs the productive powers of nations to a much smaller degree, than that which is arbitrarily imposed, collected by caprice and tyranny, and as recklessly and wastefully disbursed as it was got together!

In Great Britain an accurate account of the war expenditure was kept, and by loans and taxes a near approach to its fair distribution, according to every man's ability, was intended, if not completely attained.

On the Continent they managed matters differently. Exactions, requisitions, and confiscations, were substituted to supply the ways and means, whenever and wherever taxation was found to do its work too uncertainly and too sluggishly. Armies were raised by conscription, at a treble sacrifice of life, but with more rapidity than by the means of ordinary enlistment. Quarters and maintenance for the military were required from farmers and citizens without pay, by friend and by foe. Immense amounts were levied by kings, marshals, generals, informers, and the numerous tribe of extortioners, who seized the occasion of *universal* confusion and violence to fill their coffers. Paper money was used for a while as a silent and an efficient help to exhausted treasuries; but it proved an insidious enemy, and the evils it inflicted were found to be both insupportable and irremediable. In Russia that species of currency was rapidly reduced to one-fourth of its value, at which, after many financial struggles, it has been finally fixed. In Austria it fell to one-twelfth, in Denmark to one-twentieth; France and Holland had recourse to national bankruptcy.

Need I go on with this enumeration of incumbrances? Sir, if you were a statesman you would have known of them, you would have estimated them at their true value; you would not have soiled your pretences to wisdom and honesty with the childish twaddle that Englishmen could not compete with the foreign grower, because the latter was free from the "incumbrances of public and local taxes." Such burdens must be tested by the way in which they are raised, and the manner

in which they are expended, as well as by their amount ; and I repeat it, without fear of contradiction, and quite safe of refutation, that, taking these tests separately or in the aggregate, to try the question, an unprejudiced searcher after truth will say with me, that England is the least taxed country in Europe, more especially as taxation affects the cost of production.

At the enactment of the Corn Law in 1815, you had not reached that period of life when man, according to Young, *suspects himself a fool* ; but in 1839 you had passed the time when he *knows it* ; nay, when you delivered your famous speech, you had even overstepped the fatal year, after which, according to the same authority, "*he dies the same.*" Were I to consider your apparent unacquaintance with the fiscal regulations of the Continent venial at the *former period*, yet, at the *latter*, no palliation can rescue you from the dilemma of ignorance, or wilful deceit, in this matter. In 1839, at the age of fifty-one, you either did know, or you ought to have known, that as in England, so on the Continent, is every article which you recapitulate with so much facetiousness, as "plate, paper, china, clocks, thread, pots, wax, wire, every letter in the alphabet heading some article of domestic manufacture," protected by taxation from foreign competition, for every legislative folly perpetrated in Great Britain, has been aped elsewhere with a vengeance ; but, worse than that, burdens unheard of and unknown here, oppress the miserable inhabitants of every continental clime.

The passport system interferes sufficiently with the development and the pursuits of active and enterprising minds ; restrictions on thought, speech, and writing, stint, more or less, the growth of intellect ; a swarm of petty officials interferes with every man's business and comforts ; but, worst of all, enormous military establishments prey, in various shapes, on the very vitals of nations, and retain the population in the trammels of poverty and barbarism. Need I point to the doings of France in Algiers, to the anticipation of 80,000 men of the conscription of 1842, or to the Brogdignarian childish-

ness of fortifying Paris, to show that public or local burdens are less oppressive and less obnoxious to production in England than elsewhere? In Prussia, all men must serve three years as soldiers, except those who equip themselves at their own cost; they are let off with one year's service. In Russia the feudal system, the least favourable to cheap production, still prevails; one-half of the peasants are serfs of the crown, the remainder belong to the proprietors of the land. The government accepts of eighty pounds in lieu of a recruit; but when levies are ordered, villages will raise as much as a hundred and fifty pounds to escape the visit of the officials appointed to select the poor fellows; for expence, caprice, tyranny, and injustice, are the natural attendants on such unwelcome guests. The enormous armies of Austria are raised by a method somewhat different, but not less oppressive. The scenes that accompany such a system—but I spare to recount them—would make your hairs stand on end; suffice it to state, that mutilation of male infants is a popular crime, so anxious are parents to save their children from the calamity of military service; and lame, blind, or deformed offspring, over which we weep in pity and in sorrow, is greeted by the afflicted mothers as a greater blessing than the image of an angel. The system of quartering the troops on the inhabitants is still in existence, and in many parts is more dreaded than the plague or the cholera.

Sir, whether taxation has or has not any thing to do with the cost of production, it appears to me unnecessary to discuss with you. Before you make another speech in favour of the Corn Laws, let me advise you to inquire into it, and I am certain that you will be ashamed to repeat the fallacy that the foreign growers of corn are, or ever were, "free from the incumbrances of public or local taxes." So much for to-day.

DIAGENES.

LETTER IX.

SIR,

June 22, 1841.

As *He of Sinope* went about with his lantern, in broad daylight, seeking for an honest man, so have I sought by daylight and by lamplight through your speech of 1839 for an honest sentence, for one straightforward expression, for one great thought, for a single generous sentiment, but in vain! I am lost in the barren wilderness, where thorny sarcasm and thistly sneers obstruct all progress, where a tissue of mis-statements and inconsistencies nauseate the feelings and harass the understanding.

Oh, how different are the speeches, the writings, the doings of great men! The more we extend our acquaintance with these, the more are we fascinated! Spell-bound with the lustre of sincerity—the charm and beauty of truth, we luxuriate in the feast of delights, spread for the enraptured mind, often unable, always unwilling, to break away from the rich board of intellectual plenty,

“As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on.”

But not so your oration on the Corn Laws! Oh, what a falling off is there! I defy any one to peruse, and re-peruse it, as I have done, without increase of satiety and disgust, or without an irrepressible feeling of mental despondency, such as travellers in the frigid regions of the pole, or the sandy tracts of the equator, tell us of, where desolate emptiness begets despair, and annihilation of mind and body seems preferable to the gloomy horror of vacuity which overspreads their field of inquiry.

Rent is a subject, beyond all others, about which one would suppose you to be well-informed. Your steward gives you quarterly lectures on the matter. In speaking of it, a fair opportunity occurred for establishing the claim to candour which you have lately set up, by imitating the example of a

noble lord, who plainly told us, that he would stand by his order, and not concede any relaxation in the Corn Law, which might lower rents ; but such plain sailing lies not in your track. On this occasion you presume, with almost sacrilegious audacity, to make sport of the honoured names of Smith and Ricardo—men, whose good fame will endure long after your little reputation shall have been effaced from the tablets of time, where none but the truly good and great leave a lasting impression. You irreverently shuffle about the result of their researches on the nature of rent, heedless of the modifying process of time and experience, which might fairly be expected to throw additional light on inquiries of this kind ; but whilst you thus trifle with the opinions of men so supereminently your betters, what light do you yourself shed on the matter ? Whilst you acknowledge your incapacity to unthread the labyrinth—whilst you confess that, after having read “ all that has been written by the gravest authorities in political economy, on the subject of rent, wages, taxes, tithes, the various elements, in short, which constitute or affect the price of agricultural produce,” the question remains to you darkness visible, confusion worse confounded, difficulty greatly increased—what is the course you steer amidst this sea of troubles ? You forthwith make a law ! You found a system of legislation, vast and wide-spreading in extent, incalculable in its effects, full of balances and counterpoises, of averages and restrictions, calculated to the nicety of a half-penny in seventy-three shillings, on a basis, of the nature of which you proclaim yourself totally ignorant ! Strange perversity ! Incomprehensible infatuation ! Unmeasured presumption !

From their topmost eminence the great men, whom you ridicule, unanimously promulgate this one conclusion, that we should not meddle with matters we do not understand, nor legislate at all on what is so far beyond our ken and control. They who fondly fancied that their untired labours and dispassionate researches had enabled them to unveil the mystery of rent, said, that no laws should be made which might influence that or the other great interests connected with the supply of the daily ne-

cessaries of so many millions of human beings. Abstain from legislation, was the modest motto of the wisest of men ; interfere not, lest you should make a mistake, was the conscientious verdict of the apostles of that " noble science," as you profess to call it, " which is conversant with the laws that regulate the production of wealth, and seeks to make human industry most conducive to human comfort and enjoyment." But you, in derision of "*the respect for that science and its brightest luminaries,*" which you profess, and of the acknowledgment that " as you proceed, your path becomes more intricate and obscure," determine, in verification of the saying, " that a little learning is a dangerous thing," to legislate in avowed ignorance—in darkness visible to meddle with what you say is beyond your comprehension—in complete obscurity to enact the most absurd, the most intricate, the most mischievous of all laws—the Corn Law ! Truly,

" Fools rush, where angels fear to tread !"

Oh age ! oh men ! Is this the *brazen image* we are now to worship ! Ye worthies of former days, ye Bacons, ye Lockes, ye manly spirits, who, by a mere scintillation of exalted reason, advanced your nation centuries before all others, look down with pity on the petty generation of our days, when, at the sound, not of the great alarums, which commanded them of old to fall down, the cornets, sackbutts, and psalteries of great intellects, but of the penny whistle of tricky eloquence—the tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee of Sir Robert Peel's political philosophy, common sense, truth, consistency, freedom, and humanity, must hide their diminished heads, and every great, and generous, and bold attempt must undergo the ordeal of being torn to very rags and tatters by the sacrilegious derision of his sneers, to split the ears of applauding parliamentary groundlings !

You gloat on the likeness, the faithful resemblance of the harsh, the cold-blooded economist, as if that leaden visage, that wayward and unstable look of yours, bore not abundant testimony of the amphibious nature of your own blood ! You fear to be haunted by the portrait of the political economist, as if

the reminiscence of your speech of 1839, the assertions of which were belied forthwith, by the ruin and decay now overwhelming us, ought not to haunt you everlastingly, and to annihilate the last remnant of your authority in political science. Oh that an epitome of your speech, plain, intelligible, and true,

“ Nothing extenuate, nor ought in malice,”

could be printed and put into the hands of every man, woman, and child in the realm, to hold up to the world, as a warning, the quality of the wisdom of him who sneers at Smith and Ricardo, at those truly great men, who devoted the vast powers of their minds to the happiness and exaltation of the great human family, and who will be an honor and a glory to Great Britain, long after the shallow pretences of mere political trickery shall cease to have access to her councils! Such an epitome ought to be published; I will think of it. Enough for this day.

DIOGENES.

LETTER X.

“ And be those juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense !”

SIR,

The penny whistle of political trickery, to which I alluded in my last—the epitome of the Corn Law oration, which you delivered in 1839—the tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee of your legislative philosophy, ought to be sketched by a vigorous hand, by a Hudibras, a Cobbett, or, best of all, a Brougham—some skilful artist, to whom even the repulsive and unseemly lump of dross would furnish fit material for striking off impressions, likely to obtain currency in all ages and amongst all people; yet will I make the attempt, lest diffidence should be taken for idleness; and proceeding at once, I merely premise, that what is put between inverted commas are your own words; the remainder is, nevertheless, part and parcel of your speech,

though deprived of its pristine verbosity, which I could not find it in my heart to bestow on my readers.

*Epitome of Sir Robert Peel's Speech on the Corn Laws,
delivered the 15th March 1839.*

“ Mr. Speaker.—I have no hesitation in saying, that unless the Corn Laws can be shown to be consistent, not only with the prosperity of agriculture, and the maintenance of the landlord's interest (in the house you said—of the *rent* of the landlord), but also with the protection and the maintenance of the general interests of the country, and especially with the improvement of the condition of the labouring class, the Corn Law is practically at an end.” Tweedle-dum! “ If you had called on us to abandon this protection, with the exhibition of superior sagacity and *triumphant reason*, we should have been deaf to your appeal.” Tweedle-dee! “ So intimate is the sympathy between the condition of agriculture and trade, so powerful and immediate is the force of their reciprocal action upon each other, that if the prosperity of trade be endangered, the narrowest and most exclusive advocate cannot be blind to the consequence.” Tweedledum! “ The honourable member for Manchester, Mr. Philips, says to-night, that there are great apprehensions with regard to the decay of trade; but however much I respect the honourable gentleman and his knowledge, I wish that he had fortified his arguments and his prophecies by some reference to public documents.” [Hear, and laughter.] Predictions, unless proved to be already accomplished (a sort of Irish predictions), are nonsense. He should have done as I have done. I draw my conclusions from statements made up for the occasion; true, by adding one year to my statistical tables, my conclusions would not have been so conclusive; but what of that? They serve my present purpose, even though subsequent events should give the lie most speedily and most awfully to my conclusions, and should verify in every respect the predictions of the honourable gentleman. I pay the greatest respect to the honourable gentleman's statement;

and if he proved to me that manufactures were declining, (and that the mischief which he prophesies is already accomplished), he would have adduced the most powerful argument that could have been brought to influence my mind as to the necessity of a change ; “ but predictions without argument, and apprehensions not sustained by official returns, cannot be considered conclusive.” (This must be called both tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee)!

Manufacturing towns are productive of nuisances : I came myself from one of them. The establishment of “ a dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railways,” would be a great nuisance, and we must put them down ; therefore, I vote the Corn Law ! The Corn Law, by making food scarce, starves the superfluous population, who would, if they had plenty of food, build this “ dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns,” and “ connect them by railroads.” Down with the railroads ! down with the “ dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns !” The Corn Law for ever !

“ By the silent and unaided assistance of the existing Corn Law, when the pressure arrived, the ports were opened to foreign grain, free of duty, and there was no serious difficulty in procuring the requisite supply.” The average for the nine years, ending in September 1838, was not more than 54s. per quarter.” It does not suit me to state, that the average of the last three months of 1837 was 53s. ; that during the harvest of 1838 it rose to 69s. ; and that, during the last three months of that year, it was 76s. “ The ascent from the lowest to the highest point was as gradual as it could be under any system of Corn Laws ;” so gradual, that by the 7th of September 1838, only 15,000 quarters of foreign wheat had been cleared for consumption, although the pressure was extreme, and English wheat quite unfit for use ;—so gradual,

“ Small by degrees, and infinitely less,”

that because the average was one halfpenny under 73s.

no foreign wheat was entered for another week, but when that halfpenny had at last been added to the return, 800,000 quarters were thrown into the market at one fell swoop. I say little of this, lest the farmers, hearing of it, might have their eyes opened. Let it pass!

The stupid people who grumble at the present scarcity should think of the abundance of former years, and average their appetites, as I average the prices. If they had filled their bellies in 1833, 1834, and 1835, when there was abundance, they might now do very well with less, and so make an average of it. I don't look so much to quantities as I look to prices. If the quantities are not large, the prices at least are high: this is a comfort of which the swinish multitude should think, instead of "denouncing the aristocracy and the landed proprietors as selfish tyrants, fattening on the labour and sufferings of the exhausted poor, and provoking (if other means should fail) the resort to physical force." This is a lesson they should teach their brats: when these squall for a piece of bread of the average size, stop their mouths with average prices; tell them to wait for a year or two, when there will be again an average quantity, coupled with the unfortunate circumstances of prices below the average!

"I have read all that has been written by the greatest authorities on political economy, on the subject of rent, wages, taxes, tithes, the various elements, in short, which constitute or affect the price of agricultural produce."—"Far be it from me to depreciate that noble science, which is conversant with the laws that regulate the production of wealth, and seeks to make industry most conducive to human comfort and enjoyment."—"But I find in it no solution of my difficulties," and therefore, being quite ignorant of the matter, I vote for the Corn Law. I do not know whether rent is the cause of the Corn Law, or the Corn Law the cause of rent. "With all respect for that science and its brightest luminaries, they have failed to throw any light on the matter;" therefore I vote for

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the Corn Law. Mr. Hume has sat for the likeness of one of these bright luminaries, "the faithful resemblance of the harsh, cold-blooded economist, *who regards money as the only element of natural happiness.*" What's money?—Trash! The price of wheat has nothing to do with money; therefore I vote for the Corn Laws.

The English growers cannot sell wheat for as little money as the foreigner, who is unencumbered with public and local taxes, who is a conjuror, cares not for money, can do everything for nothing, and will give you all his wheat—for nothing!

Finally, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. "*What is good for Corn, is good for Buttons!*" There is no difference in the application of a principle, and if no tax on corn is admissible, there ought to be no tax on silk, on hats, on brass, on buttons." It would not be *graceful and decorous* to apply the principles of free trade to the farmers, before they are applied to the manufacturer;—"let honourable gentlemen shear the pigs before they fleece the sheep!"—— Shall I proceed with my elegant extracts? Heaven forbid! Those who are anxious thoroughly to fathom the depth of your political wisdom, should search your speech, both in the original reports, and in your corrected copy; they will soon see that I want the power to do you justice; but they will also see that a prostration of rectitude exists in high places, which leaves the turpitude, the vices, and crimes of low life at an immeasurable distance; and whilst dumb-founded with your ingenious turns and most elaborate passages, they will frequently have an echoing on their mental ear of the lines which I have affixed as a motto at the beginning of this letter. May many try the experiment!

DIOGENES.

LETTER XI.

SIR,

July 13, 1841.

When I look at one of the beautiful charts of the world, which it has taken the labour of ages, and of thousands of intelligent men, with an outlay of money and materials beyond all calculation, to bring to their present perfect state—charts of which no person of your stretch of mind would have foretold us some fifty years back, that they would be within every man's reach for the small sum of two guineas, or one month's wages of an ordinary labourer—charts, which by the process of calico printing, we shall presently buy at half-a-crown, I say, when I look at such a chart, and see the British isles occupy but the five-hundredth part of the habitable globe, can I avoid asking—"Whence the importance, the wealth, the influence, the power of England? Whence her greatness, whence her might? What are the foundations of her universal sovereignty? What is the cause of her wide-spread sway? Was it the extent and quality of her soil, or of her intellect, by which she grew so big? Was it the plough or the steam-engine? Has her agriculture conquered the world, or have her merchants planted her standard in every clime and on every shore? Did her wares and fabrics, or her wheat, purchase the homage of the human race? Is it the keel which ploughs the main, or the share which turns up the trodden clod, at the thought of which English bosoms swell highest? Does the heart thrill with a keener perception of national greatness, when Britannia rules the waves, or when she drives her teams a-field? The answer is plain :

'Tis passed conjecture ! All things rise in proof !"

'Tis father Thames, and not the clayey soil along his shores, which begat this huge accumulation of wealth, this great concourse of people, this multitude of pursuits and enjoyments, that have stamped London the metropolis of the world. The merchant's toil secures a princely revenue to the possessor of

one acre of ground in the city ; trade obtains thousands per annum for estates, which were bought in perpetuity a century ago for as many hundreds ; not agriculture, but the fortuitous workings of commerce make land at Kensington yield double to what is got for it at Hammersmith, give us ten pounds at Brentford, seven at Richmond, four at Kingston, and fix the annual rent every where in an inverse ratio to the distance from the neighbouring emporiums of wealth.

And yet (will ye believe it, ye future ages of superior knowledge and honesty ?) there is a petty statesman, the type and image of our puny times and petty spirits, who, from cunning or ignorance, at the suggestion of sheer stupidity, or the most depraved duplicity, stretches out his tiny arm to thwart the natural progress of solid improvement—raises his childish treble in defence of imbecility's everlasting twaddle, and the bullying clamour of monopolists—and, *substituting effects for causes*, professes to apprehend from the tribute of foreign commodities, which British ingenuity, enterprise, navigation, and commerce, pour so abundantly upon British shores, and which, in its exuberance, spreads cultivation, raises towns, builds docks, erects mansions, establishes canals and railroads, and renders the possession of a yard of land, however sterile, or however inaccessible, an invaluable privilege, destruction to agriculture, a source of danger and ruin to every national interest, and of dependence on foreigners.

If the argument were good for anything, yet it comes somewhat late in the day, this fear of dependence on foreigners, and it sounds most especially ridiculous in the mouth of wealthy landowners. For one who, whether awake or asleep—lying, sitting, or standing—in dress or in undress—eating or drinking—at breakfast, dinner, or supper—in his vices, or in his virtues—in the House of Prayer, or at Tattersall's—at home or abroad—in the senate, or on the bench—in health, or in sickness—in life, or in death—moves and has his being in the cottons, the silks, the cashmeres, the wines, the liqueurs, the spices, the coffee, tea, and sugar, the music, the opera, and the pi-

rouettes, the mahogany and the rosewood, the silver and the gold of foreigners—and who, stripped of all these, would find himself more helpless and miserable with thirty thousand a year, than the clown who lives on a shilling a day—for such a one to talk of dependence on foreigners as an evil, is as impudent as it is farcical. Who will believe him? Who will trust the generous patriotism of this wolf in sheep's clothing, the landowner, the receiver of rents, when he warns us against dependence on foreigners, and is alarmed, lest, accustoming ourselves to an abundance of wholesome bread, we should barter away the independence of the British nation for Dantzic wheat?

This fallacy, so replete with stupidity and duplicity, cannot be too abundantly exposed. The working man, if he must be dependent, had better be so on the millions of landowners abroad than on the few thousands at home. Which of the two can more effectually combine to extort from him his last penny for his daily bread? Which of the two can starve him with greater facility, the growers and merchants of the wide regions of two or three continents, or the compact phalanx of representatives of a few counties, in Parliament assembled? *Here* the attempt at redress is pronounced treason, and the suffering wretches float everlastingly between the Scylla of starvation, and the Charybdis of transportation and the gallows; *there* money will purchase relief, if not from one quarter, from a hundred others. No power on earth can resist the ingenuity and contrivances which want, and the chance of profit, beget out of commerce! It is false what you say—"that the insane ambition of one man overruled the impediments which the love of gain, or the prosecution of peaceful industry, would offer to his reckless course;" for his decrees and his restrictions were the causes of his fall: commerce triumphed over him and all his forces; colonial produce and British merchandise moved on every high road and every by-way of Europe, notwithstanding his douaniers and his burnings; and even in 1810, when Napoleon had reached the zenith of power, and when he fancied that his non-intercourse was most firmly established, more corn was brought to

England, because wanted, than had ever before been imported in one year, during the most pressing periods.

But the babbling of fools will not be silenced by common sense, nor by abstract reasoning, nor by experience. Napoleon fell because he meddled with the coffee-pots of toothless old women; the Emperor Paul stopped the trade with England, and lost his throne and his life, and his successor would have met with the same fate, had he not reluctantly broken through the fetters in which the arms and the fascinations of the great adventurer had entangled him. Nay, at this present day, though at war with China, we receive plenty of tea, and it may be bought at lower rates than were charged during profound peace by the East India Company—the honourable company, whose directors gave it in evidence, upon oath, that, if they lost their charter, the Chinese would no longer serve us with any tea whatsoever.

In the ordinary course of business, the seller is ever dependent on the buyer. With a free trade in corn, the foreign grower would be the truly dependent party. Once used to you as his regular customers, he could not do without you; but *a chance buyer*, such as you have made Great Britain by your starvation laws, your averages, and your sliding rules, is in his power. The purchaser on whom he has not calculated he may turn away, or screw him to his heart's content. Yours is the system to render the nation truly dependent, fearfully so—doubly so! First, on the landholders and jobbers at home, and then on the dealers abroad, to whom you suddenly and loudly proclaim your pressing necessities at the last pinch; tell them that, with all your struggles for independence, you can no longer be independent; *that now they can catch you for once upon the hip*; that you must come and say—*Shylock! we would have so many wheats*—we spurned you such a year—we spat upon you last season, when we were independent—we footed you, as a foreigner—as a stranger cur, *but now we would have so many wheats!* And will they not say with *Shylock*, you scorned our nations, you mocked at our grains, you thwarted our bargains;

the independence you teach us, we will practise ; and it shall go hard but we will better the instruction !

The independence of nations, as of individuals, must be based on truth, justice, wisdom, and honour, not on slippery, sliding rules, and halfpenny averages ! Those who will fairly buy, when all the world are sellers, will have the best of the bargain ; those who are always in the market will be readily and cheaply served. The gambler boasts of wanting nothing, and, putting off the evil day till the last moment, surrenders his independence to the mercies of the usurer, and the liberality of the pawnbroker. This is the independence which you advocate ; a system by which the low cunning of publicans and extortioners thrive ; the matchless wisdom of the whole tribe of those who find their best source of revenue in the stupidity and distress of their neighbours—a sliding rule which may well suit “the selfish tyrants, fattening on the labours and sufferings of the exhausted poor”—sure cards to the landed proprietors, but a desperate, a losing game to the ragged regiment, whom you lead on to the glory of independence, through the slippery and sliding paths of starvation.

Childish as the fear of dependence on foreigners is, still more so is that of overwhelming supplies threatening destruction to British agriculture, and annihilation to every blade of grass in the land. If reason did not, yet has experience refuted, in every instance, the silly anticipations of shallow-pated alarmists, and the deceitful predictions of political jobbers. When the navigation laws were relaxed, there was to be no more shipping in these seas than in Bohemia ! Behold, now a thousand steamers proudly

“beat the surges under them,
And ride upon their backs !”

The shipowners of Bristol petitioned Parliament in 1827, against the use of steam boats for commercial purposes ! Lo, in derision of themselves, they have since built the Great Western ! Not to mention the fools of Gravesend, Margate, and Ramsgate, who saw destruction in the new-born element,

or the sapient alderman and iron-master, of whom I wrote to you in my No. 2, have we not in the history of silks, oils, copper, lead, and wool, proofs abundant of the fallacy of all such notions? Why are we not suffocated with flax and hemp, which come in free? Why are we not steeped in tallow, on which the duty is only ten per cent.? Why not overburthened with gold and silver, on which there is no duty? Why not? Because foreigners will give none of these things for nothing; because they adjust their supplies not by the dreams of drivelling idiots, or the fraudulent delusions of a speculating legislature, but by their own powers of production, and our willingness to consume, which is more accurately measured by the desire to purchase, and the ability to pay, than by sliding rules and weekly averages.

It is you who, laying claim to much wisdom and much candour, ought to know and to tell us all this! If you do not know, where is your wisdom? if you do, where is your candour?

Thus much for to-day.

DIOGENES.

LETTER XII.

SIR,

July 20, 1841.

"Shear the pigs before you fleece the sheep," you triumphantly cried, as you beheld the dawn of victory on the 15th March 1839. "Shear the pigs before you fleece the sheep," you shouted, in allegorical ecstasy, sure that this refined war-whoop would drag the valorous phalanx of landowners through mires of ignorance, casuistry, and falsehood, to the honourable goal of a parliamentary majority. "Shear the pigs before you fleece the sheep," was the poetical trope which presented itself to the great politician and legislator so readily at the stirring moment of success, when conceptions are most vivid, and intuitive language limns our pet thoughts with unflinching precision—as if he had already entered on his great offices of *shearing and fleecing* (the

Alpha and Omega of his political science) the two great categories of pigs and sheep—apposite emblems to his mind of the British people!

I have heard it suggested that it was not fair to quote this sparkling *bon mot*, because you omitted it in the corrected copy of your speech published by Mr. Murray. Most excellent suggestion! Did you obtain your majority by your corrected speech, or by that delivered in the house? and did not loud laughter and applause greet this brilliant sally of your wit? That there may be no mistake, I will copy the report verbatim, and let the pigs and sheep, I mean the people, judge between us; it is, besides, pregnant with several absurdities. "If it were wise, under all circumstances, to purchase in the cheapest market, the farmer ought to have the benefit of the same principle in the purchase of the articles he might require [hear, hear]. What, however, was the condition of the unfortunate farmer, and the unfortunate owner of the land? It was said that his burdens were not greater than those of the rest of the community, but he (Sir R. Peel) much doubted that fact [hear, hear]. The land was tangible, the land was within reach, and as many burdens as could be had been imposed upon it [hear, hear]. Of course, if they were about to apply the doctrine of going to the cheapest market, they must extend it to the long list of manufactured articles which he held in his hand, and on which there were protecting duties. Of course they did not mean to say, that what was good for the manufacturer was not good for the farmer; and as corn was to be obtained where it was cheapest, so silks were to be obtained where they were lowest in price—so wines were to be bought where they were cheapest [hear, hear]. But did not honourable gentlemen think that it would be graceful and decorous, before they came upon the farmer to apply this principle, first to apply it to the manufactures? *Let them shear the pigs before they fleece the sheep!* [loud laughter] before they taxed the farmer with this principle, let them apply it to themselves! If it were good for corn, it was good for buttons; although corn was a neces-

sary of life, it made no difference in the application of a principle." But

"I'll leave this keen encounter of your wit,
And fall into a somewhat slower method ;"

for the words following the

"Let them shear the pigs before they fleece the sheep,"

deserve particular attention ; they lead you, if you are consistent with yourself, to a most extraordinary result. *What is good for corn is good for buttons : there is no difference in the application of a principle.* The sliding rule is good for corn, therefore it is good for buttons, for there is no difference in the application of a principle, and the *sliding rule is your principle.* Averages, ascending and descending scales, slidings and slippings of prices, with all the paraphernalia of inspectors general and special, returning officers and jobbers, being good for corn, are good for everything else, *for there is no difference in the application of a principle.* Sugar, coffee, tea, pots, wax, and wire (I thank you for the list), in fact, articles beginning with every letter in the alphabet, ought to be subject to this process, *for what is good for corn is good for buttons—there is no difference in the application of a principle.* Landowners, farmers, merchants, dealers, and consumers, are subject to your slippery slidings ; why not every other pursuit, every profession, every trade, every art ? *for what is good for corn is good for buttons—there is no difference in the application of a principle.* To such a conclusion your premises manifestly lead ; and unless you revoke your sapient dictum, you must apply the restraints and regulations which you advocate in corn to every occupation. The meddling system of China and Japan, the castes of Hindoo, the guilds and family trammels of ancient Egypt, would be trifles to the intricate and minute system of sliding and slipping, of superintendence and interference, which you advocate, and which you would apply to every individual action, nay, to every individual thought—*for what is good for corn is good for buttons !* You interfere with every man's belly, why not with every

man's brain! *There is no difference in the application of a principle!* And—

“ Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud
Without our special wonder ?”

Alas! they can, and many equally absurd! Thus, for instance, I find the following exquisite bit of political philosophy in your oration:—“ The right honourable gentleman (Sir Robert Peel) proceeded to observe, that this paper, in the first place, gave us the total amount of British commerce and manufactures sent out of the United Kingdom in the year 1837, as £36,228,000. Now observe, that in the year 1837 the price of corn was *comparatively low*. In the year 1838 an advance was made, and what effect had the high price of corn in *diminishing our exports?*” Why, surely, corn being dear, and large quantities being imported, exports must increase to pay for the excess;—this common sense would at once suggest; but not so thinks our prime minister—that is to be! Hear him. “ Why, in the year 1838 we exported to the value of £43,000,000 [loud cheers]. So that in the dear year, *when the price of corn ought to have contracted our manufactures*, their export was £43,000,000, whereas in the preceding year it was but £36,228,000 [cheers].” “ *Then, as to shipping, the total number of ships was in 1837, 18,113; in 1838 it was 19,616,*” [cheers.]

I have spoken of mires of ignorance through which you dragged your followers—here we have oceans! Surely, when two millions of quarters of wheat are suddenly added to the importation, there must be as sudden an increase in the shipping employed to bring this enormous quantity; but in this case the increase is a consequence of our distress, not, as you would have it, a symptom of prosperity! Every broker's clerk knows this, and must laugh at your egregious ignorance; so also does every broker's clerk know that, in this instance, the increase of shipping has proved a curse instead of a blessing, because the large fleets built under the excitement of that period, are now a source

of enormous loss and ruin to every seaport in the kingdom. Every broker's running porter will predict, that more goods must be exported when a bad harvest calls for a forced importation of foreign corn, long before you perceive the fact from Custom-house returns and official documents; and he knows, moreover, that such specific increase would be occasioned by the pressure of scarcity and distress, and prove the very opposite from that state of prosperity which your worshipful statesmanship sees in it.

Truly may you call the people pigs and sheep, when they gulp as absolute wisdom such wholesale absurdities—truly may you think them fit for nothing but shearing and fleecing, when you can make them believe that black is white, and when the dire evidences of distress can be turned by the magic of your sweet voice into proofs of prosperity! But I say that you ought to be heartily ashamed of such ignorance, and endeavour to know better. I'll warrant that to-morrow's post (I write on St. Swithin's day) will carry out more solid political economy to foreign countries, in the circular letters of the city merchants, than all your orations in and out of Parliament can teach, and than you, notwithstanding your long official life, and ex-official leisure, have been able to learn; they will say, one and all, that the weather is threatening, the crops wear a doubtful aspect, that corn may be dearer, and ships may be wanted—but that in that case the exchanges would be lower, money scarce, Colonial and British exports cheaper, and the opportunity favourable for making cheap purchases, cheaper in proportion as corn gets dearer, for the distress occasioned by a bad harvest, they will say, is sure to force the holders of goods into the market, and put them at the mercy of the buyers. Now this statement is based on common sense, and infinitely superior to your miserable jumble of pseudo-political economy, the grotesque and base counterfeit of the noble science, your ignorance of which you need not acknowledge, as you sufficiently prove it, but which you have sufficient conceit to disregard and to disparage.

Had I space, I would have said much more. I would, more

especially, have written about the property tax, to which you have persuaded your phalanx to agree, in the hope of further deluding the people. Property tax! as if a property tax could make plenty where there is a scarcity—as if a property tax could increase the number, or improve the quality of our loaves—as if a property tax could change the beans, chalk, and bone-dust, and all the rubbish which, whilst wheat is rising, will be mixed with bread-stuffs, into wholesome and grateful substances! *A property tax may gratify your revenge*, and set a mark on your political *opponents*, but it will not satisfy the cravings of a starving population. What if, which Heaven forbid, we had a harvest like that of 1838—what if the diabolical farce of the halfpenny in 73s. which in September of that year kept the people for an additional week from the enjoyment of wholesome bread, were acted over again, by means of your accursed sliding rule, would a property tax assuage famine, and cure starvation and disease? Pigs and sheep as the people are, they would resent the repetition of such an outrage on common sense and humanity—and you, your supporters and your sliding rules, would be glad to slip out of sight: no loud laughter would greet a second time orations so replete with ignorance and contradiction as that of 1839, which was graced by the brilliant effusion I have quoted to day—

“Shear the pigs before you fleece the sheep!”

DIOGENES.

LETTER XIII.

SIR,

July 27, 1841.

I have worn my copy of your Corn Law oration of 1839 to very rags and tatters, and it will no longer serve the end to which I have hitherto applied it; but you have since then delivered several other speeches, mere new editions of the old work, with but small variations, and no improvements, and they will serve my purpose equally well.

Yesterday morning, before breakfast, I ran through your Tamworth performance, and, upon my word, it made me positively sick. There seems to be something in the moral constitution which, repeatedly nauseated by the exhibition of fallacy and duplicity, acts on the digestive organs like physic; and if the mere reading of a speech affects my well-strung nerves and unpampered stomach in this strange manner, need we wonder at the alarming, the dangerous, one might almost say the unconstitutional repugnance, said to prevail at court to see the man himself, especially under existing delicate circumstances?

In your Tamworth speech, you omit all allusion to the "dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns connected by railroads," which told so well in the oration of 1839, and of which I have treated more fully in my sixth letter. At Tamworth it would not have been graceful or decorous—at Tamworth it would not have been prudent—at Tamworth you "could not be justified (as you say) if you introduced any topic of an irritating nature"—at Tamworth it was good policy in you to say "that you could not forget that you owed all you possess to the manufacturing industry of the country," and something besides about temporary distress, sympathy, your anxiety to enable them to command the luxuries of life, and all that sort of thing; but, in the House of Commons, amongst six hundred country squires, "a dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns connected by railroads intersecting the abandoned tracts, which it would be no longer profitable to cultivate," sounds more genial, suits your occasion better, and is surer to be greeted with "hear, hear, hear," than your Tamworth sympathy, philanthropy, and gratitude to the unwashed artisans.

In 1839 you ridiculed Mr. Mark Phillips and his prognostications of coming distress, calling on him for statistical tables to prove the fact, before it had been accomplished: at Tamworth you admit the distress, but then you prove that according to your tables it ought not to exist, and that therefore it cannot last. In 1839 your predictions were belied, most speedily and most awfully, by the event; at Tamworth your figures are ab-

solutely belied by the fact : but you still swear by your figures, and will not see that in political arithmetic two and two do not always make four.

In 1839 you say "that unless the Corn Law can be shown to be consistent with the maintenance not only of the agricultural, but of the general interests of the country, and especially with the improvement of the condition of the labouring classes, *it is practically at an end.*" Now, after the lapse of three years of one continued havoc of ruin and bankruptcy amongst merchants and traders, with famine and beggary overwhelming the labouring class, and despair and death overshadowing the land, you uphold the Corn Law in all its glory, and point contentedly to your figures. This is the genuine insolence of office. Like the pig-headed obstinacy of the well-fed stall ox, who will not turn round though the flames have reached his manger, and the burning roof is coming down on his fat rump, you cannot turn from your sliding rule and your statistical statements, though the seasons should be suspended from running their accustomed course, and nature herself make a pause.

Notwithstanding your speech of 1839, your large sums of exports and imports, and your increase of shipping ; notwithstanding the excellent harvest of 1840, and seasons the most favourable for grazing, we are now in the midst of dearth and starvation—with bread, beef, mutton, bacon, cheese, and butter, at famine prices. But you will take no counsel ! English wheat is at 80s. and the stock altogether exhausted, whilst the duty on foreign remains at 23s. 8d., and a full month must elapse before it can come down to 20s. 8d.—but you will take no warning ! The people must eat bread made of beans and other rubbish until next October, when the average may, perchance, reach 72s. 11½d. as in September 1838, and the legislative farce of that memorable week will be acted over once more, but you heed it not ! You ought now to open the ports by order in council, *that wheat may come freely in, because it is wanted ;* but you turn a deaf ear to common sense

and humanity, and shut up your sympathy and your gratitude until the last halfpenny shall have been extorted, according to the refined and intricate contrivance, enacted that corn may be scarce and dear.

At Tamworth you talk of manufacturing distress, joint-stock banks, Spanish troubles, and the coast of Lydia; as if wheat were one of the fabrics of Manchester; as if joint-stock banks consumed an extra quantity of loaves; as if the coast of Lydia had devoured our beef and mutton!—for these are the things that we are really distressed about. You boast of having exported fifty millions' worth of goods; *but has that brought us plenty of provisions?* You glory at our having imported a large amount of merchandize; *but where is the food which we want, and which we ought to have imported?* We want meat, and you give us stones; we want corn, and you give us statistical figures! Where are the six or eight millions of good and cheap grain which a great, a wealthy, a prudent, and a truly independent people would always have in store as a safeguard against every emergency? Alas! you want no large stores of good and cheap wheat. They are an abomination unto you. *A little and dear is your motto:* a sliding scale is your economy; and your prudence says, *that it is better to pay a large sum of money for a small quantity of wheat, than to get a large quantity of wheat for a small sum of money!*

At Tamworth you boast of not supporting extreme opinions, but it is your opinion that one halfpenny in 73s. shall settle the question whether a million of quarters shall be withheld from consumption or not, though the people be in the mean time poisoned and starved, as was the case on the 7th of September 1838. You are a moderate man, but you let disease and death have their sway, so that the sliding rule do but always *keep food scarce and dear*; for *this* is, after all, the *true gist of the argument*. All this speechifying, all this legislating, this slipping, this sliding, and thimble-rigging, about a halfpenny in 72s. 11½d. is but meant to perpetuate high prices by means of scarcity, as by Parliament established, for the *good of*

the people—I beg your pardon, I meant *the landlords* ; and if the problem were submitted to some profound philosopher—given, a certain quantity of land—query, how to secure to it a perpetually growing rental ? he would readily solve it thus : keep the people at starvation point ; increase their number as much as you can, but give them no more to eat than what you grow on the said land ; prevent all supply of food from other land ; or, if the pressure be too great, *relax seemingly* ; but slip and slide your duties such wise, that a week's adverse winds, or the difference of a halfpenny in the average price, may threaten ruin to every merchant ; adjust your laws so that the corn trade may become disreputable, hazardous, and impossible ; enact a sliding scale, such as they have in the land of liberty and civilization—in the land called England !

Whatever else there may be of folly and wickedness in your speeches, I must abandon to the researches of abler men ; it is but an offensive business to dredge such pools of falsehood and absurdity. In my progress I have been amazed at the web of shallow sophistry, enormous ignorance, and shameless misquotation. The wretched phenomena of ingenious depravity, dishonesty laughed to scorn, science, truth, and humanity trampled in the dust, may well fill even the most frigid bosom with sorrow. Who can help mourning over a nation whose political character and public morality is henceforth to be fashioned and guided by the standard displayed in these disastrous, these unfortunate, these moderate, these temperate, these bisexual, these emasculated principles, the marrow and essence of the—I suppose I must join the general cry—of the first statesman of the British empire !

With what delight, with how much rapture, would I not turn from your unsatisfactory periods, from your mis-stated facts, from your mischievous, your warped, your untenable inferences, to the portraiture of a truly enlightened and great mind, a genuine patriot and politician, a wise and virtuous legislator, the exalted benefactor of his country and age, the sun and leading star of the human race ! The genial rays of such

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a luminary would warm the coldest bosom, and guide even the dull pencil of a cynic into the bright regions of enthusiasm and ecstasy !

With candour in his heart, truth on his lips, and honour in his eye, no opponent could dispute his words, *no supporter distrust his designs*. The great mission of his calling, the advancement of justice, morality, and civilization, would demand none but the most simple as well as the most honourable measures,—purity of motives presupposes purity of means. His ambition would be to found an empire of superior intelligence and happiness ; to dispel error would be his particular talent ; and at his approach, cunning, duplicity, ignorance, suspicion, and fear would depart in dismay ; honesty and knowledge would be the attributes by which he would cause his age and his country to shine brightest above former days ; and he would bequeath to future times the difficult task of rivalling excellencies which had hitherto been deemed unattainable.

Such a one might, perhaps, tell us, that legislation was not intended to be applied to the minutiae of man's daily pursuits, wants, and enjoyments ; that legislators rendered themselves liable to suspicion when they meddled with matters evidently most profitable to themselves ; that those governments were most perfect whose interference was but rarely needed in ordinary affairs ; and that in humble imitation of the allwise Ruler of the universe, human rulers should aim at simplicity—not at complication ; at liberty—not at restraint ; that too little legislation was the preferable extreme ; that unnecessary legislation generated disrespect to the makers and administrators of laws, and challenging infringement, became a fertile source of new crimes.

Of monopolies like the Corn Law, he might, perhaps, say that they would generate, if effective, a preponderance of political interest, frequently unmanageable, and threatening to disturb the equilibrium which the vast variety of mental and bodily powers, the constant development of fresh intelligence and skill, new wants and new gratifications, seemed best calcu-

lated to maintain, as in the universe so in the state. That laws, regulating the supply of food—that the Corn Laws might not inaptly be ranged with the melancholy musings of the learned friend of Imlac and Rasselas—that the attempt, justly to apportion the supply of food to the wants of a constantly-fluctuating mass of people, would *presume* the regulation of the weather and the distribution of the seasons, and the insane fancy that the sun would listen to our dictates, and pass from tropic to tropic by our directions—that the clouds, at our call, would pour their waters, and the Nile overflow at our command—and that we could restrain the rage of the dog star, and mitigate the fervour of the Crab—Alas! in mere fond delusion might we not find (as has been found in the administration of all such laws) that some of the elemental powers would refuse our authority, and that (how true is the application) *multitudes had perished* by tempests which we found ourselves unable to prohibit or to restrain. Alas! do not let us lay the flattering unction to our souls, that we could administer this great office with exact justice, and make to the different nations of the earth an impartial dividend of rain and sunshine! What must be the misery of half the globe, should we limit the clouds to particular regions, and confine the sun to either side of the equator? What must be the suffering of half the people, should we confine plenty to the other half? What the pinings and miseries of the sucking babe, the sickly mother, the famishing poor, the aged, tottering and hungry, the feeble in mind and body, when we let the interests of the strong, the bold, the pushing, the vigorous, the powerful, and wealthy, prevail, and by the nice adjustment of a halfpenny in the average price of 73s. prevent the enjoyment of wholesome bread for a whole week, as was the case in September 1838? What our repentant pangs, should we finally discover the impossibility of making a disposition by which the world can be advantaged, though we turn the axis of the earth, and sometimes varied the ecliptic of the sun!

Quitting the mighty lessons of the great moralist, he might tell us—"Look around, and ponder on the incessant change of every thing human, before we persevere in rules and laws affecting every grain of wheat that is grown, and every mouthful of bread that is eaten. Behold the rapid whirlpool of events, the quick succession of unforeseen circumstances, the daily birth of hidden causes and effects, thought impossible! Printing, an art once unknown, now furnishes, in a few hours, and for a few pence, an unmeasured supply of mental food, such as the power of Alexander or Cæsar could not have procured—nay, which even the mightiest imagination of ancient days had not extent to conceive! Law has not protected, nay, it has opposed, with all its delays and oppression, the progress of railroads; yet we roll in a few hours from one end of the kingdom to the other. Tens of thousands glide now in splendid barges daily along our rivers and seas, where formerly a few individuals could scarcely be collected, to maintain a slow, a perilous, and an inconvenient weekly traffic. Far mightier powers than steam are as yet more or less dormant; carbonic gas is kept as a giant sleeping, chained up in safety, until more manageable; but galvanic action already telegraphs our thoughts and wishes on the wings of the electric fluid, and assists in reducing the perilous and poisonous toil of manufacturing processes, to safe and easy performances. In our streets wood displaces stones; at sea iron floats as safe as timber. Navigation, mining, engineering, and architecture, have advanced more by means of steam, in a few years, than they did under the fostering patronage of princes and sovereigns during as many centuries. Every minute we live, every breath we draw, every hour that passes by, every season that rolls on, must convince us that we foresee little, know nothing, and legislate in the dark—that the world runs on with railroad speed, and that we follow with the silly solemnity of a lord-mayor's coach; for such is the true nature of the sliding rule, by which you measure out distress and famine to the people, with the exact nicety of a halfpenny in seventy-three shillings.

In my next I shall treat you with the Syllabus of an Anti-

Corn-Law lecture, such as, I trust, will be delivered in every village and hamlet in the kingdom, during the progress of this great national argument. Enough for to-day.

DIOGENES.

LETTER XIV.

SIR,

August 4, 1841.

It does not surprise me, that you should have repeated on the hustings at Tamworth, the claim which you put in, in 1839, "for patience and attention, which you incur the risk of forfeiting, by preferring arguments and figures, dull and uninteresting in themselves, to more popular and exciting appeals," for there remains so much of human nature in the most perverse of men, that the conscious defence of error will hardly be made *con amore*, or with that glow of delight, with which the conviction of truth warms both the speaker and his hearers; and however heavy and stupid, and therefore easily mystified by sophistry, and overawed by the confident utterance of long rows of figures,

"Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,"

a moiety of your audience might be, yet the other half would most likely be sufficiently aware of the true state of the question, not to listen with pleasure to what, from motives of interest, they might be willing to hold up their hands for, or be constrained by sheer necessity to yawn assent to.

Fortunately, the noble army of anti-corn-law lecturers, who, in humble but zealous imitation of the apostles of former days, perambulate the land, to spread the doctrines of freedom and common sense amongst the people, need not share your fear of forfeiting the patience and attention of their audiences whilst delivering their instructive and benevolent discourses, for the consciousness of truth and integrity stands them in stead of the loud shouting voice of a giant. An ardour till now unknown—enthusiasm bordering on martyrdom—agitation promoted with

undying perseverance—these, as I said in my first letter, are in motion ; with these elements they find it easy to fan the dull embers of misery and starvation into a cheering blaze of wholesome indignation, and discontent full of promises—honourable and manly feelings of wrong too long endured, and submission protracted beyond all reasonable bounds. Nor have the landowners any reasonable ground to complain of the odium which the labours of this body of intelligent and benevolent gentlemen find it their duty to bring upon them, for they have the entire benefit of the stupid and infamous system of legislation against which we contend ; and whilst their swelling purses are bursting with a three and four-fold growth of rent from natural causes, assisted by a further increase from monopoly, they may well allow men's agonized feelings to burst out in a few hard words.

The landlords may be truly and properly described as the cormorants of the commonwealth, to whom nothing comes amiss which will raise rents. Now, every advance of the community tends naturally to an increase of rent, and is therefore sure food for their wide and ponderous jaws. No spade turns a clod of earth, no plough cuts the sod asunder, no pickaxe pierces into quarries above or mines under ground, but a bit of *rent* is gained ; and the success of the gardener, the farmer, and the miner is sure to be followed by an advance of *rent*. Roads and canals are opened, and they add immediately to the *rent* ; and if increased intelligence and activity fill our stage-coaches with travellers, horses and oats are wanted, and that gives *rent*. If steam-boats crowd our rivers, or carry shoals of citizens to the Gravesends and Margates of the neighbourhood, property improves, and up gets *rent*. If railroads traverse the inland counties, or cocknies fly down to Buxton or Bath, why, *rent* flies up on both sides and at each terminus of their iron course. If temperance and teetotalism economize the earnings of the artisan and the shopkeeper, they will indulge in better food and habitations, and that again adds to *rent*. If fresh ingenuity and additional mechanical contrivances cheapen articles of dress or furniture, the middling classes save, and must have their bit of

garden and land, and that also augments *rent*. If enterprising men return from the west full of bile, but with a planter's fortune, or from the east *minus* their liver, but with a nabob's wealth—lo! they will have their country-seat and park, and that increases *rent*. If vaccination saves myriads of infants from the ravages of the small-pox; if parents succeed in rearing large families with sound constitutions and hearty appetites—if the advance of medical science preserves thousands, who would otherwise have perished before they reached the meridian of existence—if cleanliness and moderation improve the value of life, and virtue and wisdom prolong its existence to the duration of fourscore years and more, all this multiplies the demand for room and food, and therefore improves *rent*. Nay, grim death himself is a sure and constant customer, bargaining daily for a thousand little leaseholds of six feet by three, and the lifeless carcasses are the most greedy and profitable competitors for land, yielding more than double *rent*; and could the dumb tenants of the grave be but driven to the hustings under some Chandos clause, what a prospect would be opened to the owners of the soil for an additional and most welcome improvement of *rent*! And yet will these greedy Jack Alls, the land-owners, have their Corn Law to make assurance doubly sure, and grunt and swear because the sliding rule lets slip in now and then a bit of foreign wheat, to interrupt this infinitely rising series—the true algebraical formula for their “*theory of rent*!”

The syllabus of an anti-corn-law lecture, with which I treat you to-day according to promise, may be of some use to the lecturers, as a ready means to gather their thoughts and arrange their arguments, when better materials should perchance happen not to be at hand. For illustrations of the various points set forth by me, they will be at no loss, because intelligence, vast reading, extensive knowledge, a ready memory, and fluency of speech, are the passports with which I find them always amply provided, and which have gained them ready access amongst all sorts of people, friends as well as opponents. *With them knowledge is*

indeed power. Were I to indulge in comments, volumes would not exhaust my zeal, and the colossal sheet of a double *Chronicle* would not contain one-half of what I could easily furnish. It may be said that truth requires but little embellishment ; but it is not only the establishment of truth, but the conquest of error, which we have taken in hand ; and error is a many-headed hydra, which a whole armoury of truth, and an arsenal full of the breastplates of righteousness, would barely suffice to overcome.

He who would conquer you must indeed be well armed, for, however great your ingenuity and talent may be, your prowess is greater—nay, it is undaunted ! What other man would have ventured, in the middle of the nineteenth century, in the reign of her Majesty Queen Victoria, in the face of the most civilized nation of the earth, in Parliament, on the 15th of March, 1839, to propose the re-establishment of every old-fashioned law and regulation, which our silly forefathers enacted to rule and regulate commerce, trade, and every, even the most insignificant, pursuits ? But so it is ; and you, who still adhere to the Corn Law, though every shallow argument in its favour has been demolished over and over again—you, who, from the hustings at Tamworth, loudly and distinctly pledged yourself a firm and unshaken advocate of the absurd and infamous sliding rule, which has been proved to be pregnant with fraud as well as mischief, you told us plainly in 1839, *that what was good for corn was good for buttons* ; and I find in the Statutes at Large a clear and satisfactory solution of this dictum, for the law on buttons, still in existence, unrepealed to this day, and liable to be put in force by the first informer, runs thus :—

“ No person shall make, sell, or set upon any clothes, or wearing garments whatsoever, any buttons made of cloth, serge, drugget, freeze, camlet, or any other stuff, of which clothes or wearing garments are made, or any buttons made of wood only, and turned in imitation of buttons, on pain of forfeiting 40s. per dozen for all such buttons.

“ No tailor shall set on any buttons, or buttonholes, of serge,

drugget, freeze, camlet, &c. under penalty of 40s. for every dozen of buttons or buttonholes so made or set on.

"No person shall use or wear on any clothes or apparel, *except velvet* (mark that, my Lord Radnor, and ye Corn-law lecturers, *velvet*, like lobsters and turbot, is excepted), any buttons or buttonholes made of or bound with cloth, serge, drugget, freeze, camlet, or other stuffs, whereof clothes or woollen garments are usually made, on penalty of forfeiting 40s. per dozen."

This is a clue to your exclamation about buttons, and would be a fair specimen of the system of legislation you mean to put into practice, had we not the distinct declaration at Tamworth that you cannot consent to substitute a fixed duty for the ascending and descending scale. "I prefer," you clearly said, "the principle of an ascending and descending scale!"

Now I have taken the trouble to look into this sliding act itself, and I find in it some few clauses which are quite as amusing as those about buttons just given. There is the following clause :—

"Sec. 33. What shall be deemed British corn? All corn or grain the produce of the United Kingdom shall be deemed and taken to be British corn for the purposes of this act." Exactly so; who could doubt it? Or was it, perhaps, a question whether only corn grown on land belonging to peers or members of parliament should be deemed and taken to be British corn for the purpose of this act? Really, they were very liberal; but why wheat, bought in Hamburg with British stockings, should not be quite as much British wheat, I cannot, for the world of me, understand. Gold bought with stockings is called *English gold*, and nobody calls silver shillings foreign shillings. But I proceed.

"Sec. 46. Punishments for making false returns. If any person shall make any false and fraudulent statements, or shall falsely and wilfully include or procure, or cause to be included in any such returns, any British corn which was not truly and *bona fide* sold or bought by, or on behalf of, the person or per-

sons in any such return mentioned in that return, in the quantity, and for the prices therein stated and set forth, every such offender shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor."

It is notorious that this misdemeanor is regularly committed twice a year by the great corn-jobbers, first for the sake of getting the duty down to a shilling, just at the moment their ships come in—and then, having paid this shilling duty, they go on the other tack, for they are fond of working double tides, and your sliding rule suiting them to the nicety of a halfpenny, they get the duty up again. This, of course, you are well aware of, and alluded to it, I suppose, when you stated in 1839, "Is it not the fact, that without any *interference on the part of the Legislature or the Government*, by the silent unaided (?) operation of the Corn Laws, the ports were opened for foreign grain, free of duty, and that two millions of quarters of wheat have been available for our consumption?" (*vide* page 31 of your speech). You were, no doubt, fully aware of these misdemeanors, and approved of them; or, if otherwise, I will venture to say there is *somebody* in Mark-lane who can teach you. One thing is clear: as my Lord Eldon said there was no act of parliament through which he would not drive with a COACH and four, so can they drive through the Corn Law whenever it suits them—I would say with an OMNIBUS, but that the act itself is an OMNIBUS of cruelty and stupidity unparalleled, nugatory for all GOOD PURPOSES, but a glorious and useful instrument for those of the bold and long-headed operators and dealers in grain. Should the weather not presently take up, we must have the ports forthwith opened (in a week or ten days) by an order in council: in that case your OMNIBUS will prove but a SILLY BUSS—and that reminds me of my Syllabus*.

Enough for to-day.

DIOGENES.

* See Appendix A.

LETTER XV.

SIR,

July 11, 1841.

You are not so very particularly distinguished for a clear utterance of your real notions and intentions, that it should have become necessary to claim, in your medical essay at Tamworth, a double allowance of the fairly-earned repute for skill in the rhetorical figure, vulgarly yclept "*mystification*." The opposite system does not sit comfortably on you. When you seem most busy with preparations for firing some great gun, your friends feel least alarm, well knowing, that however much powder you may ram in, there will be but little shot, and that small. Were you to cry out that you would gallop straight down St. James's, I for one would think myself safe in the middle of the street, and feel more alarmed for those who took refuge on the pavement ; and I verily believe the story, that we entirely miss in your last speech your favourite word "*candour*," because some damned good-natured friend told you, that whenever you use it, every lip in the kingdom curls with a sneer.

Your greatest admirers now assure us, that you are by no means so violently attached to the Corn Laws as you were before the elections, and that you would slip out of the sliding scale should you have good reasons for it. I am glad to hear it ; but, unfortunately, you have pronounced yourself, on various occasions, somewhat too positively on this matter ; as, for instance, on the hustings at Tamworth :—" I cannot consent," (hear ye that, ye free-born Britons ! *he cannot consent !*) " to substitute a fixed duty of 8s. for the present ascending and descending scale. I prefer the principle of the ascending and descending scale. I do not consider that 8s. is a sufficient protection for the landholders of this country ;" and then you add —" A duty of 8s. is proposed as a fixed invariable duty ; now I foresee that, if you apply that duty, this will be the consequence : you will have abundance of foreign corn introduced

just when you don't want it—when your own produce has been most abundant ; but *when the time of famine shall arrive*, then it will be impossible for you to raise the duty of 8s. on foreign corn. Gentlemen, what provision is to be made for that ? If corn should rise to the price of 70s. or 80s. a quarter, would it, I ask, be possible to maintain a fixed duty ?” And in your speech on the 15th March 1839, you said—“ *If you had called on us to abandon this protection with the exhibition of superior sagacity, and triumphant reasoning, we should have been deaf to your appeal !*”

It must be acknowledged, that when a gentleman, usually so wary and full of caution, drops the habitual circumspection of his temperament—oversteps, as it were, the modesty of his nature—boldly sets at defiance superior sagacity, and the exhibition of triumphant reason, and though a whole nation *will, can't consent*,

“ As who would say, I am Sir Oracle,
And when I ope my mouth, let no dog bark !”

the expectation that he would be moved to change his course, and advocate a line of legislation in direct contrariety to his last budget of principles, seems somewhat Quixotical ; but it is certainly not altogether impossible, and, I may perhaps smooth the way for you.

The singular ingenuity with which machine-makers construct tools to perform in factories and workshops the offices of the human hand—I might almost say the human head—is most remarkably displayed in a newly-invented piece of mechanism, excelling every thing of the kind I ever beheld. They call it technically, a “ *Jim Crow*,” its motions resembling the “ wheel about and turn about” of the celebrated Mr. Rice, who first suggested the idea of this clever and useful contrivance. He thus became a national benefactor ; but should you go and see the thing, and take a wholesome lesson from it, his claims on the people's gratitude would be greatly enhanced, and a suitable monument, perhaps a windmill, of the gigantic proportions of St. Paul's, placed on the top of Shooter's-hill, might be an

appropriate commemoration of his double services to the state, mechanical as well as political.

The factory where you may inspect this "Jim Crow," is far east, and on your way thither you might as well inquire in the city about the present state of the corn trade, and the working of the sliding scale, before you get on the Blackwall railroad. Suppose you called, in the plain garb of a man of business, on some of the great merchants, the Barings, the Larpents, the Hubbards, and proposed to them to join you in an importation of wheat from abroad. You might tell them that you had plenty of money, knew the country well, were aware of the state of the crops, were sure that wheat was wanted, and that it was, therefore, the proper time to bring it ; but I will wager my existence that you would meet a refusal in such words as these : Thank you for your confidence, but must decline the business—don't enter on such neck-breaking affairs—the corn trade is naturally full of hazard, but with the present system it is hazardous five times over—sure to burn our fingers—the moment there is the least chance of want, up jump prices abroad, higher than here, in anticipation of a low duty ; and when they have got *the duty down in September, they will knock* the prices down, and punish those who are too late with their cargoes—they always have some low stuff in store for that. We shall be caught in a double trap—high prices abroad, and a high duty here ; we are not clever enough for such business ; *if there was a fixed duty, there would be a chance, but now there is none.* Thank ye for your confidence, but must decline it.

Leaving these cautious, solid, and wealthy merchants, I would have you go to the Bank, and get there five one thousand pound notes, and then proceed to Mark-lane, ruminating the while a little on *the low duties in September*, and the strange circumstance, that they won't import wheat, though they agree with you that it is wanted. When you get to the Corn-Exchange, walk boldly up to the stand of some corn-factors, say Messrs. Kaye and Emm—mighty shrewd people they, up to every thing. Pull out your five bank notes ; you are sure then

to be taken for a respectable man, and they wont ask your name. As Mr. Raumer says that you look very much like an honest German, you might pass yourself off for one, and whisper in their ears—" *I want to make a little infestment.*"—" You can't come at a better time," says Kaye ; " it's all up with the crops, and no mistake."—" *Vell, vat do you recommend ?*"—" Why, beans, to be sure, man. We have just a parcel on board the *Sliding Scale*, Captain *Slip*, from Egypt, off Atkins's wharf, at 22s."—" *Vell, but vy beans ?*"—" Why, they must have them to mix, and we are working the duty."—" *Vell, but my mind vas made up of vat—vat haf you cot ?*"—" There's a cargo of Odessa, at 53s. including freight, a capital sample, not yet passed Gibraltar, and may just be in for the shilling duty ; and if you give us two shillings more, the seller warrants a six-and-eightpenny duty by the 23d September !"—" *Put von't the dooty be down sooner—there's shust now such a great vont of vat ?*"—" Pooh, nonsense !" says Kaye, " the averages can't be worked round sooner ; besides, it don't suit them to have the shilling duty before the shipments from the Mediterranean are on the coast."—" *Put, von't de noo ministers alter dem dooties, ven de see dat no vat is entered for consumption ?*"—" Stuff !" says Kaye, " they are a pack of asses—and you know Sir Robert Peel has distinctly declared that he prefers the present sliding scale." Hearing your name pronounced, you colour up, and thinking that they smell a rat, you, in the agony of your soul, cunningly pop out, " *Vat an ass Sir Roppert Beel must pee*"—decline the bargain, button up your notes, and with a hasty bow, slide amongst the crowd, but not fast enough to save your auriculars from the pleasing titillation of " to be sure he is !"

If these two experiments should not satisfy you, that under the sliding scale, wheat does not always come in when people want it, you might direct your steps to some deep calculator about the Royal Exchange—some man after your own heart, who does not mind principles, but delights in figures and statements—some great commercial or political arithmetician, who

would govern the world by statistics and the rule of three—who treats men as he would halfpence, and, provided he can handle his nine numerals with their *naughty* sister, and can show the averages to have been good averages for ten or a hundred years, does not care one straw whether *death* has reduced the number of consumers to the extent of the supplies, or *commerce* has accommodated the supplies to the wants of the consumers. These men of figures in the City are a strange set, and have the ability to demonstrate almost anything with their statements. When they want to prove that an article must fall, they show you a long account of stocks and overwhelming supplies from the east and the west, from Russia and from Buenos Ayres ; but when they are for the rise, their figures are all like a capital O ; zero is the only cipher they can write : blight in the fields, rot amongst the sheep, epidemics killing the calves, unlimited demand, and a total cessation of production are at their disposal ; their paper is patient, their imagination only fertile in barrenness, and their ingenuity wandering amongst desolation. You must, therefore, be a little on your guard, and take nothing for granted but what can be proved by parliamentary returns ; but go over with them the history of the corn trade since the end of 1837.

Of 1838 your new friend will give you the account contained in my letter, No. 3. In that year wheat advanced in price from the very first day ; the winter was dreadfully severe ; the spring unfavourable ; the summer late, cold, and wet ; and prices had reached 70s. to 80s. in the beginning of August. There was nearly a million of quarters of wheat in the bonded warehouses, but none was entered for consumption, even on the 7th September, because the average was one halfpenny under 73s.—say 72s. 11½d. Nor was this all, for by the 26th October of this—the first of a succession of years of famine—the duty was again as high as 22s. 8d. Of this horrible, this infamous state of things, you, the great statesman of the age, aspiring to guide our youthful and humane Sovereign, and to control her subjects with your paternal sway, said most complacently on the 15th March, 1839, “ But when the pressure came, was

there any *serious* difficulty in procuring a supply?" Ye Gods! was there anything but difficulties—the difficulties of the sliding scale? There had been a pressure for six months—an extreme dearth for three, and a famine for six weeks. It was as notorious as the sun in heaven! And you talk in the House of Commons only of the average of nine years! What are six weeks of famine in the average of nine years, ending in September 1838, as you coolly say, nothing—absolutely nothing! To him, whose every single morsel, which he pokes with his golden fork between his teeth, costs more than a hard-working man's pay for a day, six weeks of famine are of course nothing: they go in the average, and that, for the nine years, ending in September 1838, was not more than 54s. and odd pence per quarter of wheat, as you observed; but to the humble and overworked hind in Dorsetshire, with 6s. 6d. a-week, and a sleeping berth in his hay-loft, to the poor sempstress whose thousand stitches earn her at the utmost one penny in the hour (as I live, this is the truth), to the widow laundress, who, up at three every morning, labours through weeks, months, and years, and takes in washing at a penny the piece, to preserve to herself and her poor orphans a shadow of the honest independence, which in the life time of their sire was just sufficient to keep them from the parish and the work-house—to market, fish, and charwomen, to weavers, and factory girls, to all the thousands, nay, millions, who keep their accounts in pence and farthings, to whom a shilling's expenditure would be ruin, and to whom a pound is an inconceivable and unattainable possession, to these one week's dear and bad bread acts as a disastrous catastrophe, and six weeks of famine are an eternity of pain, anguish, torture, disease, and often death. The six weeks starvation is the iron that enters into their soul, and the balm of your nine years average of fifty-four shillings will by no means heal the wound, restore health and strength once lost, replace the rags pledged or sold, and cure the ills of minds and bodies, smitten by the infamous system which I have feebly described in my seventh letter, saying—

“ That it gambled with the people’s wretchedness—played hazard with your halfpenny averages—and had found, in the life and death of millions, a legitimate and fertile mine for diabolical speculation and infamous profit !”

Sir, your new acquaintance, the man of figures, in raptures with a visitor of a congenial mind, will tell you with high glee, that on the 1st of January 1839, the average price was 78s. 2d. therefore far beyond a famine price. It remained so till the 22d of March, when only 572,900 quarters of wheat, or ten days’ consumption, had been entered. Now, after this, did we, or did we not, want further supplies of foreign grain ? The averages fell, and by the 2d of August, when the harvest began, the price had receded to 2s. under famine rates, namely, to 68s. 2d. and the duty was only 16s. 8d. with an addition of 800,000 quarters, entered at duties averaging above 10s. 8d. But by the 20th of September the duty was again down to 6s. 8d. and the prices up to 71s. 10d. ; therefore, in these seven weeks, there must have been an enormous want of wheat ; but the entries were *only 26,000 quarters, so that, whilst famine during the harvest drove up prices, next to no wheat was supplied by the aid of your sliding rule.* But between the 20th of September and 23d of November, prices fell to 66s. ; the wants, therefore, I suppose, were not so pressing : the duty again rose to 20s. 8d. but the supplies were increased by 600,000 quarters, at an average duty of 10s. ! This is the history of the year 1839, when, in consequence of the moderate crops of 1837, and the decidedly bad ones of 1838, the people of this country endured unheard-of sufferings and immense pressures ; the prices constantly ranged at what we both agree (and it is the only thing in which we agree) to call famine prices. The duties were maintained at an average rate of above 10s ; the corn trade ruined every one engaged in it ; the supplies were chiefly poured into the markets when the duties were high, and were small when they were low ; the Bank was obliged to borrow money in Paris to avoid stopping ;

and you ridiculed the solemn warnings and predictions of Mr. Mark Philips, because not sustained by official documents ! Our man of figures will give you all these details with a glow of delight ; for what does he care for distress. or prosperity ? To him men are as figures, and figures idols to be worshipped ; his accounts are correct, his statements accurate, his averages good averages ; and he is charmed to find that the returns from hospitals, poor-houses, and bills of mortality, confirm, by a proportionate increase of wretchedness, the sum of his calculations to a minute fraction.

In 1840 we begin with an average price of 66s. 10d. receding by the 14th February to 64s. 11d. but being on the 24th April up to 69s. 6d. ; good wheat constantly above 70s. or what you call famine prices, but only 37,800 quarters of foreign wheat entered for consumption. Our wants now became probably urgent, for an additional 320,000 quarters, or one week's consumption, were entered up to the 31st of July, at a duty of 16s. 8d. The pressure now grew insufferable, and by the 4th of September, as usual, the prices were up to 71s. the duty down to 2s. 8d. *but all the while only 42,000 quarters were supplied to satisfy these wants.* From this day, however, the wants apparently diminished, prices fell, and duties rose ; on the 11th of September, that is to say, within one short week, we had the enormous quantity of 965,000 quarters entered at a duty of 6s. 8d. ; on the 2d of October it had grown to 1,280,000 quarters, with the duty at 16s. 8d. ; on the 20th of October, with only 20,000 quarters more, the duty was 22s. 8d. ; and by the end of the year, good wheat being still at 70s. or a famine price, the duty was (I blush to write it) *twenty-six and eight pence.* Read that, you statesman, you lover of your country, you leading-star of the human race, you, who in your speech of the 15th of March 1839, sneer at the "*cold-blooded economist regarding money as the only element of natural happiness :*" you advocate for slipping and sliding rules, which wheel and jump about more than ever Jim Crow did, but which, instead of convulsing us with innocent sport, threaten

to convulse the political stability of the empire, to exterminate every notion of common sense and humanity, and have already spread more destruction, misery, and mischief, than a hundred battles ! Surely a fixed duty of one, or five, or eight, or ten shillings, would not have teased and worried farmers, merchants, dealers, millers, bakers, and consumers, as this silly, childish, cruel game of slipping and sliding evidently did, and inevitably must do !

Of the melancholy tragedy of the present year, we have as yet but witnessed the opening acts. A crisis is apparently maturing, but the issue rests in the hands of Providence, and cannot be known to mortal man. What we do know is this, that our wants have kept wheat at famine prices ; but duty has only been paid on a small quantity, chiefly at the enormous rate of 24s. 8d. A large stock is now accumulating, which, with a fixed duty, would be gradually sold to consumers, but under the present imbecile and infamous system, remains quietly in the bonded warehouses, to wait the success or failure of the operations on the average price, to be then suddenly thrown on the market. So horrible is the state to which you have brought us, that many good, honourable, conscientious, benevolent, and wise men, pray to Heaven for a bad harvest, as the only, though dreadful, means by which the delusion may be dispelled, the Legislature shamed into a sense of justice, and a great nation be freed from the tyranny of prejudice, self-interest, and monopoly, which, if not upset at this pressing and momentous crisis, will perpetuate itself, enslave both the Sovereign and the people to a domineering oligarchy, and prepare for Great Britain the unhappy fate by which Poland has been erased from amongst the kingdoms of the earth.

Sir, I leave you now to go and see the mechanical contrivance which I have recommended to your inspection. My heart bleeds for afflicted mankind : I cannot go with you.

DIOGENES.

LETTER XVI.

SIR,

July 13, 1841.

At your advent to office, discretion will, perhaps, be the better part of valour. Those who cannot afford to contend with the Solicitor-General that is to be, had better hold their tongues. Gaggling bills, state prosecutions, and incarcerations, will be the order of the day; and as your *Olivers* would have no difficulty to spy me out in my *tub*, I had better leave off writing, unless I should prefer (which I do not) the total absence of sunshine. The present great fall of waters allows us little enough of the genial rays, and I suppose the sliding rule has been lately introduced at the weather office, operating exactly as your ascending and descending scale, which, contrary to your sapient declaration at Tamworth, gives us no corn now that we want it, but may perhaps give us plenty when we don't want it.

I should find fault with this arrangement of the weather, but that I look to the slipping and sliding of winds and clouds, and the ups and downs of barometers and hygrometers as so many arguments, *ad hominem*, which, tickling and teasing your upper story, may spare another extremity of your body the castigation which the Lancashire or London unwashed would be perfectly justified, and are able and willing, to apply to it. What a glorious sight, to see you, like the Roman schoolmaster, with your— but I forbear!

To-day I submit to your perusal my circular letter to the members of Anti-Corn-Law societies, dated 19th September, 1838, or six months before you made your memorable speech of the 15th March 1839. I say to you most solemnly, look on this picture and on that! Lay your hand on your heart, and ask whether you would not now have given your life to have been the author of mine rather than of your work? What will be the judgment of all the most enlightened men of the age?

what that of posterity, should the performances of two such *insignificant* beings—should your speeches and my writings reach posterity? I say *insignificant*, for, rely on it, that though you have made some little stir in the land, and may bustle a few moments longer in Parliament or office, to posterity you will be but as a soap-bubble tossed up in sport by a pigmy race, to toy away the nursery hours of the human family. There must be a giant form and a substance of adamant in the greatness that shall roll through the ocean of time, without being ground down to the insignificance of a pebble before it reaches posterity's shores!

Circular Letter to the Members of Anti-Corn-Law Associations.

“ London, September 19, 1838.

“ Gentlemen and Friends—Let me earnestly entreat you to use the present favourable moment for furthering your great object: redouble your activity, and set every power and all your energies to work in the cause of humanity, justice, policy, and common sense. Agitate the country from one end to the other; show forth in the plainest language the absurdity and madness of the Corn Law, holding up to scorn the tomfoolery of this piece of aristocratic tyranny, as well as the besotted ignorance of the people who submit to it! Will it be credited hereafter, that a people who boast of civilization can be so gulled? and who, glorying in their freedom, can be so enslaved? Ought twenty-four millions to endure a state of society in which famine may be produced by a day's rain, and in which a passing cloud spreads fear and alarm amongst all classes but *one*? What is our boasted liberty, if oppression like this cannot be shaken off? wherein differs it from the bondage of the Jews? In what are we better off than the slaves were, whom we have set free? They were compelled by the whip and the chain to work for as much as their owners chose to give them. Truly, this is our case; and we are compelled (that freemen should be compelled!) by this infernal law to labour for as much corn as the owners of the land allow us to consume, not for as much as we could ob-

tain and enjoy, were we not under this curse and this bondage ! I say this is bondage and slavery in the truest sense of the words, and it must be got rid of !

“Set, then, every penny and every twopenny publication at work. Fill every newspaper and every periodical with your lamentations and your denunciations. Sound forth a blast that may be heard in every corner of the empire ; sow the alarm amongst all interests and all parties, be they receivers or payers of rents and tithes, growers of wheat, or bakers of bread, grinders of corn, or of the poor ; let henceforth no morsel enter our mouths without the word Corn Law reverberating in our minds. Proclaim to all whom it may concern, the errors and fallacies on which this starvation law was based—the enormity of ruin and wretchedness which it has engendered, and the accelerated progression of evils which it must overwhelm us with, if endured for the future.

“Tell to ALL and every one, that *wealth* means abundance, and abundance cheapness ; that scarcity is poverty ; and that that country only can be called rich, in which the necessaries of life are abundant and cheap, and within the easy reach of every honest and industrious man ; tell them, that scarcity means poverty ; and that to make food scarce and dear, is to condemn all those to poverty with whom food is a *main* object, and by whom such scarcity is mainly felt. Now, this is the case with the bulk of the people—I mean the labouring classes—with whom food amounts to three-fifths of their entire expenditure. In what are the labourers better than slaves, if the quantity of food is limited by law, and if, with the most vigorous exertions they cannot obtain more of it than the law allows them ? Slaves ! wretches ! no wonder that despair drives them to vice, and abject poverty to the gin-shop—the high road to the poorhouse or the treadmill.

“Tell the labouring classes that scarcity and dearness of the necessaries of life must beget low wages, and that wages, or the reward for labour, can only be high when the necessaries of life are abundant ; and that it is nonsense and falsehood to make

them believe, that as prices rise so also will wages rise ; which never has been, nor can it be so in the nature of things ; and if they will but consult their past experience, they will find that scarcity and low wages have always gone hand in hand.

“ Tell the clergy (who benefit by the high rates of tithes), and all the professors of humanity and Christian charity, that during the last three months, all the old, rotten, musty, stale, and sour flour has been mixed up and baked into bread, and has been doled out to the poor at 40 per cent. above the average of wholesome bread in ordinary times ; tell them that the poor have not only been robbed, by the effects of this accursed law, of their hard earnings, to the extent of threepence out of every shilling, but that they have been poisoned into the bargain, and that the bad bread is the real cause of the bowel complaints and fevers of late, and in all seasons of scarcity, so prevalent among the poor ; tell them, that now an additional quantity of at least 300,000 quarters of corn*, once fresh and wholesome, but mouldering in our bonded warehouses, till it has grown stale, musty, and unwholesome, will be added to the perilous stuff which we consume as bread, and pay for as if it were good—tell them this, and set their thoughts on it, whether they go to their festive boards, or step into their houses of prayer ; and tell them that we want more frequent sermons on the text, ‘ Accursed is he who oppresses the poor.’

“ Tell the farmers that they have no real or permanent interest in high prices, which increase their expenditure and raise their rents ; and that experience, as well as their constant complaints, in and out of Parliament, of agricultural distress, have proved that the Corn Law is no protection to them, and that they have not flourished under it ; tell them that their interest is diametrically opposed to that of the landowner ; tell them that in the absence of foreign competition they have become the serfs and slaves of the landowner ; tell them that when such competition will be before the landowner’s eyes, he

* A large quantity of wheat and flour had been kept in bond ever since the year 1832, and the process of time injures grain very much.

will have cogent reasons to treat his tenants with consideration, kindness, and respect; for then there will be two persons to the bargain, which now he can settle his own way. Tell them that it does not follow that less wheat will be grown, but that it is sure more bread will be eaten. Tell them that they have nothing to fear from competition; tell them that the iron-masters, the silk-weavers, the cotton and cloth manufacturers, the wool-growers, the ship-owners, the East India and China monopolists, and others of the same tribe, were all equally alarmed when they were threatened to be exposed to foreign competition, but that their fears have proved fallacious, and their alarms have vanished, their pursuits having, under a system of free trade and competition, grown into a vigour and extent perfectly unprecedented and still progressing, whilst, on the other hand, the sugar-refiners, who have been nursed and protected by duties and bounties to the very last, have gone to wreck and ruin.

“Tell the landowners, that their rents have been trebled in the last fifty years, whilst all commodities not the produce of agriculture have fallen to one-third of the previous prices! Tell them, who made and who uphold this starvation-law, that if they would come with clean hands to this ‘great argument,’ they ought first to surrender such increase of rent in reduction of the general taxation, and thus divest themselves of the suspicion of the most barefaced and hardhearted selfishness; and that, whilst retaining such excess to their own uses, every one not quite a noodle will consider every plea of patriotism or policy as a farce, and mere pretence and humbug. Tell them, that unless they relax this accursed law, when people’s eyes become opened, they will see their castles and their mansions pulled down over their heads, and that the day of revenge and retribution, the longer it is deferred, the more terrible it will be. Shall famine throughout the land depend on twenty-four hours of rain or sunshine? Is one penny in seventy-three shillings to keep us out of wholesome bread for a whole week? I say, this is a farce and mockery of legislation! What tyranny, crime, cruelty, and infamy, thus to trifle with the lives, wants,

health, and comforts, of a whole nation ! One penny in seventy-three shillings ! Will it be believed hereafter, that they were such tyrants, and we such fools ? Tell them that they are as stupid as they are wicked ; and that, in cramping the energies of the people, and preventing the free and full development of the nation's wealth—in decreeing that we are not to exchange our labour for as much food as we can get for it—in starving us, by their accursed and stupid Corn Laws, they rob themselves ! Tell them, that in a better state of social policy, the value of their land would be as much enhanced, and probably more, than it can be by their miserable and selfish system of legislation. Tell them that their acres, of which they have the monopoly, would be more sought after for the production of superfluities and the gratification of luxuries, than they ever can be for the supply of the niggardly pittance of necessities which are extorted from the soil, to feed, or rather to starve, our wretched population ! Tell them, that as they have got rid, by the new poor-law, of four millions of rates, they ought to relieve us of four millions of taxes, and pay them out of their rents ! Tell them these and many other truths, and frighten them, if you cannot reason or shame them, into honesty, decency, and humanity !

“ Show to all the fallacy of the twaddle about reciprocity ; show how no one will give us corn for nothing, and that if they did, it would be all the better ; show how, if foreign governments are such fools as to lay restraints upon imports, their subjects must sell their produce on terms worse for themselves ; they, not we, are the losers, if they will not reciprocate with us ; and if we imitate them, we are as great fools as they !

“ Tell his Grace the Duke of Wellington, who says he is afraid (!) of foreign dependence, that he knows nothing of such matters, and that the seller is more dependent on the buyer than the buyer on the seller ; tell him that, when the Emperor Paul stopped the trade with England, his subjects strangled him without much ceremony ; and that Napoleon would not have been beaten by his Grace but for the decrees of Berlin and Milan.

“ Enlighten those who, ignorant of the working of taxation or of the nature of taxes abroad, claim protection on that score. Tell them, that but for this curtailment of the people’s food, England would be the least-taxed country in Europe. Show them how taxes are raised abroad ; show them in what way military service weighs upon the energies, intelligence, and industry of the continental people ; prove to them that scarcity and high prices are the result of bad management or bad crops, and that with fuel and iron, cheaper in England than anywhere else—with good roads, abundance of manure, ready customers, and many other advantages, whatever can be naturally produced here, could, and ought to be produced better and cheaper than any where else ; but that as regards corn, *free competition*, one of the great items in cheap production, is wanting. Show them also, that the pressure of taxation can surely not be diminished, but, on the contrary, must be augmented, by submission to a perpetual scarcity and frequent partial famine.

“ Tell my Lord Melbourne how he convicts himself of nonsense when he says that change is an evil, and then advocates the Corn Law, which is a perpetual change of the *natural state and current of things*—namely, a regular, constant, and abundant influx of foreign wheat.

“ Gentlemen, such, and many more truths, it is your business to put before the public, in every possible shape and language. Now is the time, if ever ! Sound the alarm ! rouse your friends to action ! put your opponents on their defence ! Agitate all ! you have every thing to gain, and you cannot lose any more than what you are now losing—that is ALL ! And use no sparing language or mincing phrases. Call things and persons by their right names. Robbery and murder are no less so because acts of parliament sanction them. The slave-trade was infamous, although countenanced by kings and councils ; and though great judges pronounced the sentence, yet were the poor wretches murdered who perished as witches. If we are gulled, robbed, and starved, they who do so, though they be great lords, landowners, and legislators, are cheats, thieves, and

criminals; and let these be their by-names in the mouths of children and babes! Let proverbs hand down to distant generations the truths, the axioms, the nicknames, which a close examination of the Corn Law suggests. The time for patient submission is passed. Agitation, in the name of truth, justice, humanity, policy, and common sense!—agitation! this is my urgent request and advice.

“A FELLOW LABOURER.”

The duty on wheat had been in this year as follows :

January 14, 1838 . . .	34s. 8d.	
July 20	20s. 8d.	
August 17	16s. 8d.	
September 14	1s.	
October 26	22s. 8d.	and no mistake
December 14	1s.	ditto

Six months after I published my circular letter, you said in the House of Commons, and printed at Mr. Murray's—deliberately printed—“*It ought not to be forgotten, that the weekly averages show that the fall from the highest point to the lowest, and the ascent again from the lowest, was as gradual as it is possible to be under any system of Corn Laws.*” These are your words!

DIOGENES.

LETTER XVII.

SIR,

August 19, 1841.

In the autumn of 1833, I succeeded in uniting a few friends into the first Anti-Corn-Law Society. Of our proceedings the *Times* newspaper of the 30th of November of that year gave the following report :—

“*Repeal of the Corn Laws.*”

“A meeting was held yesterday at the South American Coffee-house, for the purpose of effecting the repeal of the Corn

Laws by the formation of Anti-Corn-Law societies throughout the kingdom. The chair was taken by Mr. Hawes, M.P. for Lambeth.

“ The Chairman briefly stated the object of the meeting. It was intended to institute an Anti-Corn-Law Society, whose views would be to obtain and spread every possible information on the nature and effect of the present Corn Laws, in the hope that such knowledge would lead to their abolition in the easiest and most satisfactory method. It would be necessary that the society should not be too large, as numerous assemblies were found inconvenient ; but it was hoped that similar societies would be formed in imitation of the ‘ ANTI-CORN-LAW SOCIETY, No. 1,’ both in London and in every part of the kingdom. One of the principal methods of diffusing information on the subject it was intended to adopt, would be the dissemination of small tracts and pamphlets, and he trusted the time was not far distant, when their efforts to disabuse the people would be crowned with success.

“ Mr. Burgass observed, that discussion on the propriety of abolishing the Corn Law was not necessary, as the attendance of every gentleman was *prima facie* evidence of his supporting the repeal, and they did not want opponents [hear and a laugh].

“ Resolutions were then passed, restricting the number of members of the *London Anti-Corn Law Society, No. 1*, to 30, and appointing Mr. Hawes chairman, *pro tem.* of the society ; Mr. Burgass deputy chairman, *pro tem.* and Mr. Wilson honorary secretary, *pro tem.* ; and it was resolved, that those three gentlemen, with two others, should form the preliminary committee, who were to conduct the proceedings of the three first meetings of the society. Subsequent resolutions declared that fresh rules and regulations, based on what other similar societies might have determined upon, or what might be deemed expedient and necessary, should be submitted at the fourth meeting, to be then discussed and voted upon by ballot, when fresh officers might be elected ; that every member should have his name enrolled on the books, and pay one guinea entrance, and

that the resolutions then passed, should be printed, and copies given to every member of other Anti-Corn-Law societies.

"A letter was read, dated Nottingham, in which the writer announced that the formation of an Anti-Corn-Law society in that town was in progress; and it was stated that a similar society was in the course of formation at Dundee.

"Thanks were voted to the chairman, and the meeting separated.

"A very clever summary of the arguments in favour of the Corn Laws, with the title of 'Form of a petition to the Upper House against any alteration in the Corn Law,' was laid on the table. The irony and terse humour which pervades the composition, must cut like a two-edged sword through the ranks of the advocates of the present system."

This summary contained the substance of the Syllabus appended to my fourteenth letter, in a form which I then hoped would attract readers; but it proved a failure, as every such attempt well might do, when the publisher of my performance, as well as of "the Quartern Loaf," a weekly paper issued by our Anti-Corn-Law Society, No. 1, assured us that one half of the people would not, and the other half could not read.

The time chosen to establish this society might not be propitious to an immediate victory over prejudice and ignorance, but it was most suitable for dispassionate inquiry, convenient legislation, and dangerless changes. The country had emerged from the severe pressure of a succession of bad seasons, with their attendant evils of *scarcity, high prices, general suffering, and political agitation*, aggravated by the predial disturbances of *Swing*. We were fast entering on a brighter period, blessed with good crops, yielding an abundance of food, excellent in quality, and cheap in price—a rapid progress to prosperity and contentment became perceptible, and the low range of agricultural produce was particularly calculated to lessen the ill-founded fears of a ruinous foreign competition.

So precious a period ought to have been used for a large advancement of civilization and good government. It was one of those fortunate epochs which the genuine statesman knows so

well how to seize upon ; for he who would govern on principle, not on compulsion—he who would legislate from choice, not from necessity—he who would have his policy a smooth course of justice and wisdom, not a jumbling helter-skelter of party spirit and momentary shifts—he who would himself be ruling, not be the tool of a ruling faction—he who would be master of his measures, and controller of events, must know how to use

“ The chances nature sends,
And shape them to his purpose !”

But, whilst the Anti-Corn-Law societies were thus springing into existence, what did you see in these auspicious aspects of the times ? As you tell us at Tamworth, you only saw the necessity of laying the foundation of a great party !—(A curse upon your parties !) You established the most noble and puissant order of *noodles*, of which you proclaimed yourself grand-master. You silyly squatted down on a nest of some three or four hundred *Conservative eggs*, out of which, after half-a-dozen years of silent and painful incubation, you hatched your pretty brood, half vultures, half goslings ; and when the time of pressure returned, when every difficulty, when all the suffering re-appeared, which we had before experienced, and which the wise, the humane, the select, amongst mankind, the aristocracy of mind, had proclaimed, over and over again, as the unavoidable issue of the Corn Law, you dished up (which my Lord Stanley says you know so well how to do) to the house and the country, that addled compound of your incubatory meditations, the speech of the 15th March 1839.

Doctor Channing, the great American divine, whom you can quote, as a certain personage can quote Scripture—Dr. Channing says—“ A great mind is formed by a few great ideas, not by an infinity of loose details !” Had he your speech in view, that infinity of loose details, not one of which, as I have sufficiently shown, can stand the test of fair criticism ? Did he, perchance, think of the loose details which you dish up about the Savings' banks of Manchester or Glasgow ? Do we

not all know that deposits in them are by no means made by the labouring classes generally, but chiefly by thrifty domestics, and by the children of wealthy parents, who use those institutions to teach the young idea how to—save? Do we not further know, that the deposits may have their origin in the ruinous state of retail business, and the impossibility of finding a better and safer employment for small sums of money? Finally, have not the accounts, published since you made your speech, proved the existence, in those very towns, of an incredible amount of wretchedness, penury, starvation, and disease, showing that the inferences you would draw from your loose details had no foundation in fact? And though you may fancy that there is greatness of mind in the subtle use you make of your opponent's declarations, *which, I must grant, you are abundantly skilful to press into your service*, yet, if your inferences are false, what avails the plea that others furnished you with arguments? The Eternal Source of justice cannot be so tricked, neither can you escape exposure by sheltering yourself behind Mr. This's statements of prosperity, and my Lord That's account of the increase of trade, when, but for your resisting the committee of inquiry, abundant evidence was at hand to display the giant strides with which distress was stalking through the land. Listen to what Dr. Channing says on such subtleties:—"Force of thought may be put forth for other purposes—to amass wealth, to blind others, to weave a web of sophistry, to cast a deceitful lustre on vice, *to make the worse appear the better cause*. But the intellect, in becoming a pander to vice, a tool of the passions, an advocate of lies, becomes not only degraded but diseased; it loses the capacity of distinguishing truth from falsehood, good from evil, right from wrong; it becomes as worthless as an eye which cannot distinguish between colours or forms. Woe to that mind which wants the love of truth!"

You profess not to comprehend "*the lucubrations of the brightest luminaries of that noble science*," for which you pretend to entertain "*the highest respect*;" and in your triumph you fall

ul of "*the harsh, the cold-blooded economist regarding money (as if you did not regard money!) as the only element of natural happiness.*" But I apprehend it is not difficult to guess who might have sat for the "likeness, the faithful resemblance," when Dr. Channing, in the "humbler department of portraits," (I use your words) "*sketches the politician*" in these remarkable phrases. "He is *not elevated* by figuring in public affairs, or even by getting into office. He needs previous *elevation* to save him from disgrace in his public relations. Office is not dignity. *The lowest men, because most faithless to principles, most servile to opinions,* are found in office. I am sorry to state, that at the present moment political action in this country does little to lift up any who are concerned in it; it stands in opposition to a high morality. Politics, considered as an invention of temporary shifts, as the playing of a subtle game, as the tactics of party for gaining power and the spoils of office, *is a paltry and debasing concern.*"

In your speeches, which, to do penance for my sins, I have inflicted on myself the dismal task of dissecting, there remains abundance of matter for further animadversion. The sickening ingenuity with which you turn to vile uses the statements of an eminent political writer, may escape the chastisement it deserves, but, remaining in print, the stain which such partial employment of valuable materials casts on you, can never be wiped off. Your conclusions might be easily refuted, but that their name is legion; but, to give an instance, you avail yourself of Mr. M'Culloch's statement, that with a fall from 86s. 3d. to 57s. since the year 1820, "*the most extraordinary improvements have taken place in agriculture,*" to prove the necessity of *keeping up prices!* If the statement goes for anything, it would, however, show *that further improvement is not incompatible with a further fall in prices;* but when you add to this statement, the words "*not only without an increase, but with a very considerable diminution of importation,*" you simply state what is not founded in fact, the importation, taking decennial periods, having doubled since then; but, taking

triennial periods, you must well know the increase to have been fourfold. What, again, is plainer than that, if tithes were a tax, requiring a protecting duty, that duty would act as a bounty on the produce of tithe-free land, and a tax to the same amount ought to be collected from the latter? But it is time to quit these loose details, which perhaps some more patient investigator will take up where I must leave them now.

I shall conclude with a brief retrospect of your course during the growth of the Anti-Corn-Law leagues, of which *the report* furnished to-day fixes the somewhat disputed origin, and may therefore be looked upon as an historical document of some importance.

Wheat is now at ninety shillings, and you ought, in your capacity of one of the Privy Council, to step in, and prevail upon government to open the ports; but you continue your twaddle about sliding rules and protections—make us believe that it would be as difficult to get butter out of a dog's mouth, as to obtain your "consent to a fixed duty," and instead of *entitling* yourself, by one generous act, to the suspicion of something like feelings of pity and mercy, you glory in entitling yourself to the cognomen of Sir Rhubarb Pill—that comprehensive nickname, which embraces in three words the full contents of one of your most studied orations.

You foresaw the necessity of forming a great party; but you did not see the necessity of sparing a greater party—the wretched party of the people, whom, by your resistance of the committee of 1839, by your declaration that "even with the exhibition of superior sagacity and triumphant reasoning, you would have been deaf to the appeal to abandon this protection," you delivered over to the dire fate, which Mr. Mark Philips so clearly, so distinctly, unfortunately, so correctly predicted, which events have but too awfully verified, but the apprehensions of which you treated with scorn, and turned away from with a sneer, "because not supported by statistical statements," and because the averages for ten years had been "only 54s. and odd pence."

You wanted to smite your great foe, Lord John Russell, but you smote the people! Where were your bowels of compassion? The Psalmist said, "Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done?" But you, *three years of famine* did you choose, instead of saying "Be on me and my father's house, but not on the people, that they should be plagued!"

You sanctioned the Chandos clause, which, as all short and precarious tenures must deteriorate agriculture and diminish the produce of the land, though it may pander to pride by generating a debasing dependence on the caprice or political interest of the landowner, yet, though it should advance you to the helm of the state, it will only place you there in the same debasing capacity of *tenant at will*, liable—the prime minister of the greatest empire in the world—to be turned out as one of the £50 occupants under my Lord of Buckingham.

And if it were otherwise—for there are those who assert that all this was but a *mask* worn to secure your darling object, and meant to be cast off as soon as you have reached the top of your ambition—if you would in earnest come to your country's rescue—rid yourself of the noodles, on whose backs you have been borne into power—set up a new, a purer idol, and dare to worship the policy of simplicity and truth—if it were so, the calamity would be none the less! 'Tis impossible that you can do it—'tis a dream—you have supped too full with horror—you have gone too far to return; but grant it were otherwise, and it would be a fearful calamity, more fearful than your previous course—your resistance of every good and useful measure, your tact in confounding your opponents, your unsolid arguments, your tasteless embellishments, your mouse-traps and your clap-traps, your shearing of pigs, and your fleecing of sheep!

The thousands whom your countenance of the Corn Laws has prematurely despatched to their great account, may at least point to you, when arraigned for their ill-prepared appearance before the final judgment seat—the hundreds of thousands,

whom starvation and misery have thrown into the arms of vice and the grasp of disease, have the solace, that he, who declared he would "be deaf to the appeals of superior sagacity and triumphant reason," is a partner, if not in their physical distress, yet in their moral bankruptcy. And though some may wink at, others profit by, and a few admire your present course, yet *now* many abhor your motives, more despise your means, and mostly all are anxious that the example, be it profitable or profitless, shall not pollute the immediate precincts of their thresholds.

But should you, on your accession to power, *cut* the paltry and debasing concern—the party which you profess to have fostered with so much foresight and care, what will it be but a colossal triumph of successful iniquity? Power will shield you, fashion can even palliate, relieved misery may hail your desertion; but when you turn over this new leaf—when you proclaim yourself no longer deaf to the appeals of superior sagacity and triumphant reasoning—when you not only declare your admiration and respect for the Smiths, the Says, and the Ricardos, but learn to comprehend the science of these luminaries, and to put their doctrines into practice—when you acknowledge that duties fluctuating in a few months from 34s. to 1s. and again to 22s. 8d. and back to 1s. are not "as gradual as they might be under any system of Corn Laws," when you see clearly, that averages of ten years, however low, can be of no earthly consolation to the wretched man *who has now* to keep his wife and children on 7s. per week—when you discover, that though wheat may be imported when it is wanted, yet it will not be entered and sold for consumption until the averages have been sufficiently worked by a gambling race of speculators, the spawn and offspring of your slipping and sliding scale—when you concede your hundred fallacies which I have exposed, and your thousands which remain unexposed—when you, who have spent the best part of your life to make the worse appear the better cause, shall tell us, that during the little remnant of your existence you mean to try the other way, alas! then also will

one general inoculation of duplicity palliate every moral and political delinquency, and, as Dr. Channing has it, "genius become a scourge to the world, its breath a poisonous exhalation, its brightness a seducer into the paths of pestilence and death!" Your speeches will become the handbook of every aspirant to fame, honour, and station; the history of your political career the study of rising generations; your peculiar genius the model of the future national character; the great qualities of consistency, faith, firmness, and simplicity, a byword in the mouths of babes. It is clear, and you must see it; the greater the change, the greater your reform; the more pernicious the example, the more permanent the contamination, for—

"That's the very curse of evil deeds,
That they engender a long line of evil."

DIOGENES.

APPENDIX.

(A.)

*Notes to serve as a Syllabus for the Use of Anti-Corn-Law
Lecturers.*

1. The Corn Law has been enacted to prevent the free importation of foreign corn.

2. It is essentially the landowners' law, and the offspring of fraud and ignorance.

3. Fraud is committed whenever the real motives for any act are withheld, and false ones substituted.

4. The fraud at the enactment of the Corn Law consisted in withholding the real motive, viz. *high rents*, and in gulling the people with false notions of the general interests of the country, dangers of large importations, fiscal regulations, and want of reciprocity abroad, protection of farmers' profits and labourers' wages, general and particular taxation, and many other fallacies suggested by selfishness, and conceded by ignorance.

5. This fraudulent law was intended, and has had the effect, to limit the supply of food, not to what is really wanted by the people (and of which no one ever formed a proper judgment), but to what can be produced in this country, or what can be obtained from abroad, when extreme pressure has raised prices to an enormous height, and when, in fact, a partial famine has opened the ports.

6. The Corn Law was meant, and has succeeded, to render the trade in corn difficult, intricate, very hazardous, and almost impossible.

7. It limits the supply of food, without any regard either to the present number of the people, or their possible or probable increase.

8. The growth of food is very uncertain, and requires at all times a considerable part of a twelvemonth ; and it is the height of folly and cruelty to rely on the home produce only, exposing the whole community to sudden suffering in case of failure, or, which is the same thing, to a perpetual chance of famine.

9. With the present Corn Law a passing cloud alarms the city, a shower of rain lowers the price of the public funds, and affects every species of industry and property, and a week of cold and wet weather fills the nation with dismay, and threatens distress, famine, and national bankruptcy, which must, sooner or later, lead to revolution and civil war.

10. The want of a single meal is to most men a serious hardship.

11. Many meals must be foregone, for the space of three or four months, on the occasion of a short supply of food, or a bad harvest, by the bulk of the people, until a scanty relief, slowly afforded by importers of foreign grain, who have been gradually turned into mere gamblers on averages, duties, and the people's wretchedness, can be obtained.

12. In the mean time, those who do not go without meals, and who do not die from absolute starvation, are, in great numbers, obliged to sustain life with old and spoilt provisions, sour or stale flour, rotten cheese, rancid bacon, beans, bone-dust, and other vile substances not fit for swine to be fed upon.

13. The strong, the pushing, the vigorous in mind and body, and the wealthy, may continue in various degrees, to guard against extreme distress ; but those who are lowest in the social scale—the poor, the ignorant, the weak, the gentle, the meek—fall the sure, the chief, and the earliest victims to this infernal and unchristian law.

14. Low fevers, and various diseases attendant on penury, sorrow, want and hunger, bad food, or absolute starvation, are

constantly raging amongst the humbler classes, to their great suffering, and physical as well as moral deterioration.

15. Habitual physical suffering leads to vice and crime ; and destruction of bodies and souls in vast numbers are the result of the Corn Law as by Parliament enacted, which, therefore, may be called " An Act for legalizing murder and encouraging crime."

16. When the Corn Law was enacted, gross ignorance of the effects of commercial and fiscal legislation was generally prevalent.

17. A notion had obtained currency and universal assent, and was sanctioned and acted upon by government, as an incontestible axiom, that the importation from abroad of commodities was an evil, and that the specific advantage of foreign trade consisted in the exportation of goods from this country.

18. It was the ambition of finance ministers to be able to boast that we had exported much, and imported little.

19. Many prohibitory measures were assented to upon this delusive principle, with a view to diminish the quantity of imports ; and bounties and other inducements were employed to increase exports.

20. Such a system reduces itself to the simple principle, that it is profitable to get rid of many things, and to receive few in return.

21. The object of getting rid of commodities might be more easily obtained by burning, than by exporting them.

22. The national object and benefit of foreign trade consists entirely in the importing and supplying the people with such foreign commodities as are in demand and wanted.

23. Exports are payments for imports, and constitute the disadvantage inseparable from foreign commerce, just as in individual dealings the payment is a disadvantage to which we submit, because we cannot obtain the things we want without it.

24. If all the commodities of the world could be imported without exporting a single thing in return, that would be the

most profitable state of foreign commerce ; but, unluckily, foreigners will not trade on such terms.

25. False notions used also to prevail of injury arising from the exportation of money and the precious metals ; but these are only commodities, with which, as with other merchandize, neither individuals nor nations would part, unless they could get something, in return, which suited them better, and was worth more to them, and of that they are better judges than governments and acts of Parliament.

26. If foreigners will give their wheat, or other goods, for nothing, we ought by all means to take the same ; but if they really stand in need of gold for the goods we want of them, and we will not give it, we force them to fetch it themselves from the Brazils and Mexico, which they will most assuredly do, leaving us to supply our wants on worse terms.

27. The commodities which are most saleable are most wanted by the bulk of the people, and are more useful to them than money, or other things, which they are willing to give for the same.

28. The prohibition of the importation of foreign wheat proves the apprehension that there is a ready sale for it, which means that it is wanted.

29. If there was not a great want of foreign wheat, it would not be readily saleable, and would, therefore, not be imported, even had we no Corn Law ; the very existence of a Corn Law is a proof of its absurdity ; for what is not wanted will not come, and need not be prohibited.

30. Much nonsense has been talked and written about reciprocity, and the absence of it in other nations, meaning that they will not take anything from us in return for the wheat which we import.

31. That should, however, be no cause of uneasiness, since, provided we get only the wheat and things we stand in need of, we may leave it safely to them to see how they get paid.

32. It would be absurd not to take that which we want

from foreigners, because their governments will not allow them to receive in return goods which they would prefer to money or other things, which they in fact want, and would have, but for their own absurd restrictions.

33. Our government should not inflict hardships on us because other governments oppress their people. We should not be fools because other nations are such.

34. The people who live on wages of labour, amounting to at least three-fourths of the nation, must necessarily exchange by far the greatest portion of such wages for food for themselves and their families.

35. They must necessarily feel the deficiency in the supply, and consequent rise of prices, to a much greater degree than those with whom the purchase of food is but a secondary consideration, and of whose general expenditure it forms but a small item.

36. A government which prevents the labourers from obtaining as much food for their wages as they might do, deprives them of their natural rights, and robs them of a part of the only property which they possess; the Corn Law is therefore public robbery enacted by Parliament.

37. Abundance means wealth, and scarcity poverty, and in a happy, wealthy, and well-governed country, every thing would be abundant and cheap.

38. In England wages have always been high when food was abundant and cheap, and low when it was scarce and dear.

39. The labourer pays for his food with his labour, and must work harder when food is scarce.

40. In times of scarcity, no man's money goes so far in the purchase of food, and less can be spared for other things, and therefore the labourer will not be required to make so many things; in other words, whilst the labourer stands in need of greater pay, wants higher wages, and is willing to work harder, his labour is in less demand, and he will be obliged to sell it for less money.

41. In times of abundance, and when food becomes plentiful and cheap, less labour will purchase a larger quantity.

42. Such abundance, requiring a smaller outlay for food, allows a greater outlay, and creates a greater demand for other things, and therefore for labour, and the labourer will be at such periods in greater request, better paid, and better off in the world.

43. Abundance of food is therefore doubly advantageous to the labouring classes, who often, with greater inducement, have less necessity to work, inasmuch as they are enabled to purchase more food for less money, while more money will be given for less labour.

44. In fact, scarcity, high prices, and great suffering amongst the bulk of the community, are one and the same thing; and abundance, cheapness, and general well-being, go together, and are the opposite state of things.

45. The so-called agricultural interest consists chiefly of three classes, the labourers, the farmers, and landowners. They are necessary to each other; but their interests are as different as those of the sick man, his doctor, and the undertaker. The sick man wants to get well, the doctor wants not to kill, but only to drug him, but the undertaker would bury him.

46. It is neither the labourer's nor the farmer's interest to support the Corn Law, which threatens to reduce them to the slavery and the servitude of feudal times, and was only enacted for the interest of the landlord, who wants to get high rents, and therefore high prices, for that is the same thing.

47. Farmers have the same interest in high rents and dear land, that the shoemaker has in dear leather.

48. Farming cannot, in the long run, yield greater profits than other pursuits; and whatever is temporarily got by rising prices, slides insensibly into higher rents, which landlords are sure to extort.

49. High prices and high rents require larger capital, and make farming *more difficult and hazardous*, and the losses occa-

sionally attending this, as other pursuits, out of proportion more disastrous in their effects than they would be with low prices and low rents.

50. If any extra burdens were found to rest upon the production of food, a wise government would remove them, or lay an equivalent duty on foreign grain, and thus take away every pretext for filling the landlords' pockets with high rents.

51. It has been repeatedly and incontestibly proved, that such supposed extra burdens, if they exist at all, cannot amount to as much as the freight and insurance upon importation from the nearest foreign port.

52. If the landowners had the fear of foreign competition before their eyes, they would be obliged to humour and accommodate the farmer, and not drive such hard bargains with him.

53. Foreign competition would enable the farmer to treat on independent terms with the landlord; and the wretched system of short leases and tenants at will, with all the attending evils of political degradation and bad farming, would give way to independence of character, and superior culture of the land.

54. Farmers would be obliged to bestir themselves to meet the competition of foreigners, and would employ more labourers, treat and pay them better, and feel a pride in being assisted by intelligent and industrious men, who, with a fair stage and no favour, might defy all the world, and prove that competition is a great element of success, and that Englishmen delight and thrive in it.

55. The plea that the high taxation, and *what is called the artificial state*, of this country require high prices and prohibitory measures, is stupid and false.

56. The savage state is not favourable to abundant and cheap production, nor to the development of human energies. It is man's business and destiny to *depart from the savage state*, and to progress to civilization, which increases his powers. The most natural state for man is that where mind and body have the greatest scope for useful exertion, and in this respect, but for the accursed Corn Laws, and silly and unnecessary restric-

tions on commerce, *England is far a-head, and therefore in a more natural state than any other nation on earth.*

57. Taxation is a test of good or bad government, and if England is *worse taxed* than other countries, it must be *worse governed.*

58. With the exception of the Corn Laws, and other stupid restrictions, England is less taxed than any country in Europe.

59. But if it were otherwise, it would be absurd to fancy that the difficulty of high taxation can be rendered easier, by creating the additional difficulties of commercial restrictions and scarcity of food.

60. This would amount to the silly assertion, that people with empty bellies and in strait waistcoats, can work better, and produce more, than those who are well fed, and have the use of all their limbs.

61. The taxation of England does not prevent our producing cheaply and abundantly iron, coal, tools, implements, manufactures, steam-engines, newspapers, and many other things, which are all made by people that pay the same taxes as labourers, farmers, and landlords do ; and there is always (as ought to be the case in a wealthy country with EVERY THING, BUT ESPECIALLY WITH FOOD) a superabundance of such things.

62. On account of the great risk attending the trade in corn, because of the violent fluctuations of prices, and the uncertainty of duties and of the sliding scale (which was invented to tease, puzzle, distress, and disgust merchants, and prevent them from regularly importing foreign grain), much more money is now paid for wheat when wanted from abroad, than need be paid were the business carried on in a regular manner.

63. We might, in fact, have a large quantity of wheat for a small sum of money ; whereas we now pay a large sum of money for a small quantity of wheat, which seems to be bad management on the part of government for the people at large, although it no doubt puts high rents into the pockets of the landlords.

64. The constant under-supply of food has a most pernicious influence on the habits of the poorer classes ; it accustoms them to look upon a full meal as an almost unattainable good, prevents every indulgence of hospitality and kindness, hinders them from preparing and using wholesome and agreeable varieties of diet, and habituates them, like the beasts of the field, to feed always on the same stuff, and to devote all their energies to the one object of filling the belly ; it therefore blunts their feelings, stupifies their understandings, extinguishes their humanity, and gradually reduces them to the state and nature of the lower animals.

65. Lord Grey publicly declared in 1827, that the Corn Law was enacted to make rents high ; and notwithstanding all and every pretence of its being beneficial to the people at large, it is notoriously looked upon by every sensible man as a public fraud and a *great political lie* ; and the example thus set by the legislature, proverbially palliates and justifies amongst all classes every species of fraud and deception, on the plea that justice, honesty, and *candour* are mere sentences, useful to gull stupid people ; but that, as the landowner, so also should every one else look to *number one*, whatever they may say to the contrary.

66. The awful responsibility of such a state of society, threatening destruction to every moral and religious principle, rests with the makers and abettors of the Corn Law, and though they may escape the consequences for the present, yet they will have to answer for them hereafter.

67. The want of food is sooner and more acutely felt than that of any other commodity, and to make a nation dependent for its supplies on the single source of home growth in a country of small extent, not very fertile, and crowded with inhabitants, shows a great want of foresight and political wisdom, and is an extraordinary instance of selfish and cruel legislation.

68. Agriculture is a pursuit liable to the chances of weather, blight, vermin, and many uncontrollable circumstances, and to encourage it by artificial means, and the stimulus of specific legislative protection, is more likely to lead to disappointment

than pursuits which are chiefly dependent on mere industry, and the free will and control of man.

69. It is the will of God, as revealed by the Christian dispensation, that all men should be brethren, and this spirit is effectually furthered by the commercial intercourse between the various nations of the earth, called into action by mutual wants and various abilities to satisfy the same.

70. The dependence, founded on mutual wants and interests, is a very wholesome dependence, and well calculated to check national animosities, and to prevent governments from entering upon wasteful and bloody wars ; and peace, goodwill, and plenty of food, secured by free trade and honourable competition, would be infinitely better than the starving independence decreed by a few landlords at home, and which is no independence at all.

71. The Corn Law is not only an injury and calamity to this empire, but also to foreign countries ; for the frequently unexpected demand caused by the sliding rule (which is an infamous enactment to destroy the legitimate, regular, and necessary trade in human food) raises prices abroad, and deprives other nations of their grain when they can ill spare it, and are not prepared to meet our wants. At such times, British commerce, instead of diffusing general well-being, simply but most cruelly transfers famine from this to other countries, and instead of blessings, calls down curses, deep and loud, upon the merchants, the legislature, and the people of England.

72. The fear of overwhelming supplies from abroad is quite absurd ; a great increase of raw produce, but more especially of food, requires not only much good land, but new capital, implements, cattle, roads, labourers, and steady and industrious habits, conditions which can only be the result of time, and will not spring up in a day, a month, or a year ; and wherever both capital and labour are in abundance, there the food produced is wanted at home, and can no longer be spared for exportation, as we see in England and in France.

73. Free and full competition will produce greater abundance and somewhat lower prices, but *an immense additional*

consumption, and consequently a steady, ready, and rapid sale of the additional supplies of food, which will compensate every reduction of price ; experience has shown this to be the case with every commodity or convenience that has been offered to the public, in greater plenty, and on lower terms.

74. It has been held, by the general consent of mankind, at all times and in all places (parliament excepted) that abundance of food is a good thing, and that scarcity is a bad thing, and this seems to be dictated by common sense ; an immense quantity of selfishness, cruelty, prejudice, and stupidity, must have been combined, to prevail upon an entire nation to assent to a course of legislation in the most direct opposition to truths so manifest and incontrovertible.

75. With an abundance of food, there is a constant scramble amongst butchers, bakers, and provision merchants, to get customers, and they will use every endeavour to serve them cheap and well ; but with a limited supply, the scramble will be amongst the customers, and they will have to put up with every sort of rubbish, the means to purchase which they have to earn by an excess of labour : the Corn Law is the true cause, not only of the cunning, vice, and crime of our population, but also of the necessity of men, women, and children, having to work from twelve to sixteen hours a day.

76. The complaint of want of employment is an absurd complaint, it being the want of food and the commodities which labourers wish to use, but which do not exist, and which, though they worked ever so hard, would not be forthcoming, of which we ought to complain.

77. Laws restraining the hours of labour cannot increase the quantity of food which the labourers scramble to obtain ; higher wages would not increase our stock of beef, mutton, and bread, which are now at famine prices ; and if all the taxes were taken off from every article beginning with every letter in the alphabet, that would not increase the quantity of wheat or potatoes grown in England. The remedy for the deficient supply must be sought in a more profitable and quick exchange of the

people's labour for food, wherever it can be got, by means of an immediate removal of restrictions on individual exertions and national industry, whether of the labourer, farmer, manufacturer, trader, or merchant; in other words, by free and unbounded competition.

78. All Corn Laws, with or without sliding rules, which are intended to prevent the importation of a single grain of wheat, ought therefore forthwith to be repealed.

79. *The landowners will be nowise injured by such a repeal*, for the general increase of wealth, content, and national happiness, will be a better protection than the Corn Law, which is an irrational, dishonest, and disgraceful prerogative, and a constant, inevitable, and indisputably just cause of discontent; they will, *to their own surprise*, find themselves in possession of a more profitable and secure monopoly, that of a constantly increasing value of land, arising from the growing riches of the community, and cheerfully conceded, because based on natural causes, on justice, humanity, and sound policy.

80. By the total repeal of the Corn Law, Great Britain would make proclamation to all mankind, in a noble and exalted manner, of the repentance and reform of a great people, which, amongst many disinterested acts and deeds of humanity, have unfortunately set the example of national error, by a foolish, puerile, and meddling system of commercial legislation, aped every where else, and causing universal delusion, much suffering, wretchedness, and contention, with sorrow, vice, crime, war, bloodshed, and death, to millions of our fellow men.

81. Such a great public acknowledgment, confession and reform of national and political error and sin, will give mankind an impressive, magnanimous, and practical lesson of the highest human wisdom, and set a glorious precedent of true state policy, sure of general imitation, and certain to advance England more, infinitely more, in the esteem and wondrous admiration of the nations of the earth, than all the battles her armies have gained, the victories yielded to her on the seas, the

wealth accumulated by her merchants, the miracles performed by her manufacturers and her artisans! The cunning of such wisdom will disarm all envy, jealousy, and suspicion; it will render all negotiations and treaties unnecessary; it will counteract all prohibitions, custom-house unions, and exclusions; it will irresistibly open to the British trader every frontier, port, and warehouse of foreign parts, and render every nation, that has to spare commodities, useful, agreeable, or necessary to Englishmen, tributary to the comfort, wealth, and happiness, of this great empire, by means of the uncontrollable force of circumstances, and the innate principles of human nature! Happy the statesmen who have minds to comprehend, and will and power to practise such wisdom!—Happy the sovereign, in whose councils such men have a seat!—Thrice happy the people who are ruled by their measures!

82. The Lilliputian knowingness of the right honourable pretender to statesmanship, who, more wise in his own conceit than the Almighty ruler of the universe, will measure out, to the nicety of *a halfpenny in seventy-three shillings*, the supply of food to the greatest nation on earth, is not sufficient, by his own confession, *to comprehend the science that teaches such wisdom*. What he comprehends, or intends, he states not at his late dinner, in his late speech in favour of *the silent system*; he only shakes his head, and there is nothing in that. But from the hustings he has explicitly declared, that he is still an unaltered adherent to the sliding scale, which includes the application of it, not only to the humble manufacturer of buttons, and Snip, the tailor, but to every other human pursuit, for there is, according to his own words, *no difference in the application of a principle*. To him, then, unless in the strange vicissitude of human affairs he should find it expedient, with the versatility of character which distinguishes great minds and vast intellects, to react the drama of the Catholic emancipation, and emancipate our bellies, either from the pressure without or within—to him we must not look for a repeal of the

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Corn Law, or other restrictions. He is for the sliding scale—he prefers intricacy to simplicity—and cannot comprehend that the mysteries of politics and the difficulties of governing might be unravelled and diminished by the easy process of abstaining from the meddling, tricking, piddling, troublesome system of old-fashioned legislation, of which the Corn Law and sliding scale are the almost last ridiculous but cruel remnant—a remnant which he has hitherto publicly defended, but which he seems now inclined to exchange for something *probably worse*, because requiring the veil of secrecy, the safeguard of darkness, and the gloomy protection of mysterious silence—fit attributes of conspiracy and treasonable proceeding, but ill suited for the government of a great, a powerful, a bold, and an honourable nation.

83. When clouds are seen, wise men put on their cloaks. It behoves then all thinking persons, patriotic men, lovers of their country, and friends of mankind, to be up and doing, and to exhibit to the world, in every possible point of view, the absurdity, injustice, and cruelty, of the Corn Law, and every other restriction on honest industry, and the development of our powers and faculties. Mankind cannot stand still; if we do not advance, we shall recede. We have been forewarned, for in the words of him of *Bosworth* has he of *Tamworth* spoken, saying—

“Plans have I laid, inductions dangerous;
Dive thoughts down to my soul!”

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!



POSTSCRIPT.

SIR,

Seventeen letters without a single postscript would be unprecedented in the annals of correspondence ; besides which, I have many reasons for adding a few parting words, with which I must now trouble you.

The fine weather has come to your rescue, and, allaying public alarm, may possibly confirm you in your Tamworth declaration, "*I can't consent to a fixed duty !*" If so, it will, as a matter of course, prevent your opening the ports, which ought to have been done weeks ago by order in council, to let in wheat now that we do want it, instead of waiting until the duty has been got down by hook and by crook to admit it, when there may be no want for it. This has been the effect of your sliding scale for the last three seasons, as you may see from the following table :

AUGUST.				SEPTEMBER.			
		Wheat	Wheat entered			Wheat	Wheat entered
		in Bond.	for Consumption.			in Bond.	for Consumption.
1838	....Qrs.	919,885	....12,682	....	48,570	....1,400,960	
1839	.... "	384,984	.... 4,646	....	27,155	.... 765,384	
1840	.... "	688,144	....17,469	....	691	....1,362,450	
Total duty paid in August..				34,797	Do. in September..	3,528,794	

from which it would appear, that our wants in September are a hundredfold greater than in August, which is manifestly absurd, the truth being, that with enormous stocks in our warehouses, and wheat at what you call famine prices, none is entered in August ; but when the harvesting of our own crops secures us at all events against immediate want, immense additional supplies are suddenly poured in by the Corn Law jobbers.

Now, I hate repetitions, unless they be the wisdom of Solomon, or the wit of Shakespear ; but I can really not abstain from ringing once more into your ears the old peel, the wise words which you pronounced in the House of Commons on the 15th March 1839, viz.—“ But when the pressure came, was there any serious difficulty ? The fall, and again the ascent, was as gradual as it is possible to be under *any system of Corn Laws !*” Well may you call out with honest Dogberry—“ I am a wise fellow, and which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any in Tamworth, *and one that knows the law !*” Did you know the law ? Marry, it must strike every one, that its most ardent admirer has writ himself down——what you can see, if you read honest master constable’s speech to its finale.

If, as you have stated, a fixed duty won’t do, and if, as we all see, your sliding rule won’t do, I think we must come to the conclusion, that “ *no system of Corn Laws*” would be preferable, and help us most speedily out of the dilemma.

Whether the present crop will be an abundant one or not, it is impossible to know ; but the quality must be inferior, and the lowest duty may not be attained ; the operations may fail. Many of the speculators may be ruined, and their powers to afford relief in future times of want will be crippled. Your law however has taught them the trick, and sanctions their practices. In the mean time the public is swindled out of the enjoyment of an abundance of wholesome bread, and the country is kept in a state of desperate agitation, laying the foundation to wide-spreading ruin.

Perchance you consider misery and suffering as a state of wholesome discipline. Perchance you agree with one honest “ Joshua Dee,” merchant and politico-economical writer in the reign of good George II. who gives his reasons for scarcity and dearness, as you may read in his twenty-third chapter, containing propositions for better regulating and employing the poor, at page 73, thus :—“ It has been remarked by our clothiers and other manufacturers, that when corn be cheap, they have great difficulty to get their spinning and other work done ; for the

poor could buy provisions enough with two or three days' wages, and would spend the rest in idleness, drinking, &c. (what he means by &c. he does not tell us; perhaps reading, gardening, fishing, wholesome instruction, or innocent recreation?): but when corn has been dear, they have been found to stick all the week to it, and the clothiers have had more work done, with all the ease that could be desired." Good Mr. Gee! Ease on the part of the clothiers seems to him a most excellent thing! They are not idle; they don't drink; they don't &c.! But *ease to the labourer*—that alters the case!—there be idling, drinking, and that confounded &c.! Good Mr. Gee!

By way of appendix, I have added a transcript of the circular letter, of a mercantile firm of eminence in the city, conveying to continental correspondents its views of the present aspect of the times and the wants under which the country labours. There is, in my opinion, much to be learnt out of this letter, and I wish that you would devote a few minutes to its perusal. When merchants turn philosophers, statesmen, I think, should try to become rational men.

DIOGENES.

(B.)

Transcript from a Mercantile Circular, dated the 17th August 1841.

The present position of this country might be viewed with less apprehension, if a change in the Administration, with all the excitement of party-spirit necessarily attending it, were not at hand. The struggle between monopoly and free trade once commenced, it requires no great penetration to see, that whatever obstacles and delays may occur, the conflict must end in strong and efficient measures, calculated to furnish new and greater outlets to manufacturing industry, and a further extension of the general commerce of the kingdom.

There are two objects of main importance, on which the new ministry (whatever its political tendencies may be, or of whatever individuals it may be formed), must immediately decide, viz.

1. The means for supplying the deficiency in the revenue, amounting to about seven millions; and

2. Those by which the pressing wants of the lower classes may be relieved, and their situation rendered less wretched and threatening.

The Whigs, during the ten years of their administration, had gradually taken off taxes to the amount of £8,730,000 \pounds annum, including £1,000,000 of the Post-Office Revenue, saved to the public by the establishment of the penny postage. Many of these reductions will ultimately be made up by the greater productiveness of the lower rates; but, in the mean time, they cause temporary difficulties, less dangerous on account of the amount of the deficiency, than on account of the conflicting opinions about the remedies to be applied. It can be now of little use to raise the question, whether the reduction of taxes has been carried too far—if even determined in the affirmative, that could not alter the present state of affairs, nor would it perhaps prove to have been the only mistaken measure of the Whigs; there can, however, be no doubt that it was their intention to benefit the nation, and meet the exigencies of the age. Unfortunately, the expenditure has, during the last years, exceeded every thing that could be contemplated. Rebellion in Canada, war with China, the Eastern Question, and preparations to meet the threatening attitude of France under Thiers' administration, have cost large sums; and had it even been otherwise possible to raise these without increased taxation, yet the higher prices of every description of food since 1837, have diminished the consumption of taxed commodities amongst the middle and lower classes, and diminished the productiveness of the general revenue. The following facts will exhibit the causes of these reductions somewhat more in detail:—

From 1828 to 1831, the prices of corn ruled high. The lowest of these four years shows an average of 60s. 5d. \pounds quarter of wheat; the highest, 66s. 5d. It will be recollected, that the consumption and industry of the

country suffered much, and that the Tory administration was forced to relinquish office.

The subsequent seasons, with better crops and low prices, afforded great relief to the community. Taking the annual consumption of wheat at 16,000,000 of quarters, which is a common and very moderate estimate, the total amount of the consumption, at the annual average prices, would appear—

In 1834..	at 46s. 2d.	per quarter....	£36,900,000
1835.....	39s. 4d.	"	£31,400,000
1836.....	48s. 6d.	"	£38,800,000

For the three years.... £107,200,000

and in the succeeding three years, in consequence of the diminished crops and enhanced prices—

In 1837.....	at 55s. 10d.	per quarter....	£44,700,000
1838.....	64s. 7d.	"	£51,700,000
1839.....	70s. 6d.	"	£56,500,000

For the three years.... £152,800,000

These calculations cannot be refuted, being based on the official returns which regulate the admission of foreign grain, and they show, that the excess of cost of wheat alone, leaving the greatly enhanced prices of every other description of corn unnoticed, amounted, during this period, to £46,000,000, that is to say, annually to £15,000,000 more than in the preceding years. Since then, the value of British wheat has remained much the same, and it follows, that in the five years, from 1837 to 1841, considerably more than £100,000,000 sterling has been disbursed for grain of all descriptions, beyond what would have been the case had prices ranged, not as low as in 1835, but at the average of the triennial period from 1834 to 1836, viz. 45s. It is not requisite to prove by details, that the greater part of this enormous amount must fall upon the middle and labouring classes, who form every where the bulk of the nation, and who have increased here very largely since the war; nor is it necessary to show, in a very detailed manner, how the consumption of all articles of common necessity or comfort, has decreased of late years. Families belonging to the agricultural as well as the manufacturing classes, earning only from 10s. to 15s. must relinquish every enjoyment and comfort when bread rises fifty per cent. in price; and there are many hundred thousands of such families, hardly able to earn that amount by the labour of their hands, and must therefore find it difficult to obtain even a regular supply of bread; nor are those who earn from 15s. to 30s. per week, much more able to indulge in any thing beyond absolute necessities. Such is the miserable situation of the labouring classes in the richest country in the world. Can it be denied that a faulty and corrupt course of legislation has caused so monstrous an anomaly, reflecting any thing but credit on the nation or its rulers. The advocates of monopoly often pretend that low prices of food reduce wages; the reverse of this is sufficiently clear: a greater demand for

manufactured and other commodities creates a greater demand for labour. The value of labour is not enhanced by the price of the necessaries of life, but rather by the power or disposition to employ it, and these are greater when all classes prosper. In the United States, where the ordinary wants of the labouring classes may be satisfied in abundance, and at much lower rates than here, wages are much higher. It has been, in fact, repeatedly proved, and is now generally admitted, that in dear seasons, wages have always been lowest—perhaps, generally, from twenty-five to forty per cent. lower; besides which, labourers have to work beyond their strength to gain their scanty livelihood, the market being glutted with labour, as it would under parallel circumstances with other commodities.

When the population of this country was less dense (in 1821—21,000,000, in 1831—24,000,000), a deficiency in the crops, however important and disastrous, was not quite so full of pernicious consequences and danger; and the restrictions on the admission of foreign corn, though even then bearing hard upon the labouring classes, were not in an equal degree detrimental to general prosperity. In these latter times the population has gone on increasing at the rate of $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. per annum; the result of the present census is not yet known, but there is reason to conclude that the united kingdom contains at present 28,000,000 of inhabitants. In many parts, the ratio of increase is even greater, but less in Ireland, in consequence of constant emigration from thence to the United States, as well as to England. However wretched the situation of the English labourer may be, that of the Irish is still worse, and the latter considers it a blessing to share the fate of the former. Ireland however has progressed in improvement, chiefly through the means of a Catholic clergyman, who has gained over to the cause of temperance between four and five million of the most drunken and wretched of his countrymen; but this has caused a direct loss to the revenue of about £1,000,000, in the falling off of the excise and malt tax.

We can only slightly touch upon the present excitement in the corn-trade of this country; the details are in fact only interesting to corn-speculators. There is no doubt that the bad weather prevailing during the last two months has been unfavourable to the ripening and the harvesting of the crops; but as long as the present, or a similar, Corn Law exists, we must expect (be the harvests favourable or not) every year nearly the same result. It will be hardly ever possible to obtain a stock sufficient for the consumption of the year, much less a surplus. The increase of the population cannot be limited, nor the growth of corn, under present circumstances, be much extended. It is said that the science of agriculture has reached a high degree of perfection; this however is not the case. The agriculturist here has never fairly encountered competition; the stimulus, caused by dependance on the general market of the world, has led to the real superiority of our manufacturing industry, and would carry the farmer to the same pre-eminence: the protective law deprives the latter of the inducement to produce greater quantities, or a better quality, at less cost, by talent and increased exertion. There is no doubt much could be done in this respect. The land of countries that

may be compared to England as regards soil, and other advantages in agricultural pursuits, is more heavily taxed. Our landowners have for years exerted themselves to remove the burdens on land, and have succeeded in getting rid of many and in materially reducing the remaining taxes upon agriculture. Their object was not however to make corn cheaper, but to make rents higher, and these are in fact much higher than in the beginning of the present century. There may be exceptions, but not many, and in those cases the landowners have had the advantage of seeing their estates much improved; but in many instances the occupier of land being only a yearly tenant at the highest possible rent, he is without the means or inducement to increase production by the outlay of capital, or by exertions, which only a long period of occupation would encourage or justify.

Our corn dealers are possessed of great wealth, and command immense capital; they are therefore quite able, except in years of unusual abundance, to control the value of the supply which appears in the markets. When it is theirs and the speculators' interest to keep the prices of wheat during a great part of the year at 60s. to 66s. at which the duty ranges between 26s. 8d. and 20s. 8d. (and is consequently prohibitory) they know how to do it. Then *some millions of quarters* of wheat may be bought on the Continent at low prices, the foreign markets being depressed; but when this has been accomplished, their interest changes, and requires that their purchases should be admitted, not at 20s. but at 1s. duty, and they contrive to screw up the price from 60s. to 73s.; for this process opportunities generally occur once or twice every year; they arise, of course, when an apprehension of want raises the value, and if that is not sufficient, returns of fictitious sales lend an artificial aid; but as these manoeuvres often take six months time, the lower classes must in the interim pay twice or three times as much for bread as what it can be had for elsewhere. A reduction in the sliding scale will not remove the evil; yet the statesman who is now likely to rule the councils of the country clings to it, and prefers it to a fixed duty of 8s. per quarter, and will not satisfy the nation, and do justice to the labouring classes. In fact, the question of the Corn Laws has not been, nor will it be decided on principles of justice, but by the control and influence of Sir Robert Peel over his party, which will not be sufficient, were he so disposed, to satisfy the nation by effective relief.

Since the beginning of last month, wheat has risen in value 15s. to 20s. per quarter, or about 25 per cent. The duty is now 20s. 8d. and will continue to decline; already hopes are entertained that by the end of September it may be down to 1s. From many parts of the country the advices respecting the wheat crops are not so unfavourable as they have been generally reported; oats and barley, it appears, will be plentiful, and their value has not as yet been much enhanced. The weather continues unfavourable, and little progress has been made in the harvest; we have had rain, with little intermission, since the beginning of June.

In our circulars we have so frequently alluded to the corn question, that

we are afraid of tiring our friends ; but it bears most materially on the two important points to which we have adverted. This is the fifth year in which corn crops have been affected in quantity and quality by the weather ; but it would be impossible, even with the most favourable seasons, and at high prices, ever to grow sufficient corn for our consumption, since every year 400,000 new consumers are born. It appears really impossible that the landowners should be able to maintain, for any length of time, their monstrous monopoly of the present Corn Law ; and it can be satisfactorily proved, that with a free trade in corn, they would not lose even in their rents, which amount, for Great Britain and Ireland, to £58,000,000 per annum. England imports from the Continent of Europe alone, yearly, goods to the amount of £20,000,000, viz.—silk, tallow, flax, wool, seeds, wood, wine, hemp, &c. ; and according to the official returns of the police prefect, there are permanently residing in France about 54,000 Englishmen, and there are probably an equal number in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, &c. These absentees draw almost their entire annual expenditure, which cannot amount to less than £5,000,000 from England. All this is effected, without any financial difficulties arising from it, and yet are we required to believe that a financial crisis would and must arise, and ruin the country, if a few millions more were wanted for which an equivalent in corn would be obtained. It is no doubt possible, that a sudden call for such an amount may prove injurious, but if there was a regular and permanent trade in corn, it would not be felt.

The general extension of trade and commerce seems to involve less complicated interests than those affecting the Corn Law. High duties and protections have in many branches of trade, secured a monopoly to a few parties now naturally opposed to a more liberal system. In every instance, however, where during the last twenty years relief from high duties has been obtained, a large increase of consumption has been the result. The consumption of Coffee, formerly subject to a duty of 1s. per lb. has increased since the duty was reduced to 6d. from eight millions to thirty millions of pounds, yielding now instead of £420,000 in 1824, a revenue of £1,000,000 sterling. Even in this article a partial monopoly still prevails, the duty being 9d. on Coffee imported from the Cape or Sincapore, and 1s. 3d. if direct from foreign colonies. The latter is a prohibitory duty, and so would 9d. be, but that the favoured British colonies do not produce enough for the wants of the empire. The Sugar monopoly is more important ; the consumption of Coffee amounting only to £1,000,000 sterling, whilst that of Sugar amounts to £7,000,000, entirely supplied from British colonies, both exclusive of duty ; the duty is 24s. and 5 per cent. but on foreign Sugar it is prohibitory, being 63s. and 5 per cent. ! Commerce might be increased, foreign governments conciliated, reciprocity of intercourse augmented, and yet might British colonists, who have already been paid £20,000,000 for the emancipation of their negroes, be favoured, though not protected by exclusive monopoly. Half measures have hitherto been applied in almost every instance. The duty on manufactured silks remains at 25 to 40 per cent. serving only to protect smugglers, whose transactions annually amount to fully £1,000,000 sterling ; for we find from

the returns of the French custom-houses, that goods to that extent are entered out for England beyond what are legally imported here.

There can be no doubt but that is the best policy to purchase in the cheapest markets, especially for a nation that possesses such unparalleled power, both of production and consumption. We have on former occasions alluded to this principle, as well as to the absolute necessity of an entire revision of the British Tariff; that necessity has become more urgent, as likewise the determination of the people to obtain it, and their opposition to submit to fresh taxes, or to the certainty of ruin to the finances necessarily consequent upon fresh loans.

Our allusions to the immense extension of British manufactures have been frequent. The elements for the progress of this species of industry, such as perfection of machinery, and a peculiar genius for the advancement of mechanical contrivances, abound here more than any where else, as well as immense money capital (either belonging to the manufacturers, or furnished by many wealthy banking establishments), and large domestic and foreign outlets, more especially increasing to all transatlantic countries. The home-consumption, owing to the high price of provisions, has, however, decreased, and manufacturers have produced more than they could sell. Official documents prove, that though more duty was paid on raw materials in 1838 than in 1839, yet the export of manufactured goods exceeded in the latter year that of the former by £2,000,000. This was not owing to a really increased foreign demand, but to decreased consumption. Manufacturers cannot afford to stand still; that would bring a certain loss, and they prefer to export the excess of goods, which in the two last years was large. The transatlantic markets have been over-done, and the losses thereby sustained, have been increased by those on the returns, which were generally made in colonial produce. An immense number of failures in the manufacturing districts, amounting to at least £10,000,000, have hence ensued, and the entire losses incurred since the autumn of 1840, have been estimated at fully £15,000,000, by one of the most eminent authorities in the city.

If only wealthy people entered into business, it could never have arrived at its present enormous extent; but manufacturers all over the world obtain loans of money at something above the ordinary or market rate of interest, the security being frequently merely personal, namely, the honour and skill of the borrower. This rational and beneficial system may perhaps sometimes be carried too far, especially by bankers; but unless the losses are so large as to produce failures, difficulties are generally met by increased energy and confidence, and rather encourage than check increase of production.

Immense as the items may appear that we have enumerated, they are, after all, the least important fact of the matter now forced upon the attention of the government and the people. Similar periods of distress have frequently occurred, and have as frequently disappeared. The resources of this country exceed every thing foreigners can conceive; coal, iron, and other metals, manufactures, ships, colonies in all parts of the globe, empires in Asia and Australia

must give it, happen what may, an immense preponderance. The amount the circulation, including bills of exchange, has been estimated even as late as last January at £181,000,000; and the banking transactions in the city of London in a twelvemonth at near £1,000,000,000.

How singular is it that with such elements of prosperity, the people and the legislators are constantly at war about the most simple axioms of legislation, the application of which the wants of the nation seem indispensably to dictate, viz.—

1. Cheapness of food.
2. Extension of trade, by reduced duties on consumption, and increased intercourse with other nations.

It must be acknowledged, that it is not easy to reform antiquated systems, and to meet the spirit that has developed itself during the last twenty-five years. Though Great Britain has grown great through commerce, yet she has caught the spirit of monopoly from former trading nations, who were all essentially monopolists. But now, when other nations follow fast upon England, in the development of manufacturing industry, and when new empires have sprung up in other parts of the globe, the attempt to prosper under the restrictive system, seems really absurd.

Volumes might be written without exhausting the subject, and without exhibiting all the difficulties and interests now at work—and which should be amalgamated for the general good. The matter has been handled by many eminent men, and to their statements we must refer. Extreme opinions of free trade, on the one hand, and restrictions and monopolies on the other, are espoused by the two great parties. Tories, in favour of the latter, adhere to old forms and principles; the whigs often hold the extreme opposite notions. The present crisis is, however, neither unusual nor dangerous in a country where for centuries past public discussion on the main interests of the state have been common, and where the government looks, in a great measure, to public opinion as a guide for legislation. It always has been so in this country, and will always be so.

The Reform Bill, of 1832, has disappointed many. Bribery continues to be practised, and will continue till the ballot is introduced—perfect purity will, however, even then, not be attained. It is thought, that at least £2,000,000 sterling have been spent at the last election, which has secured to the tories their present majority. As of late, however, a system of compromise has decided the most important legislative questions, it may be expected to settle the present differences, especially if the voice of the nation should pronounce itself more loudly.

Parliament will be opened on the 19th instant; the excitement is even more than unusually great. Before the middle of September, the new ministry cannot be expected to have assumed office, and no important laws will be brought in until some weeks later.

POSTSCRIPT THE SECOND

I HAVE read **THE SPEECH**! not your Speech of the 15th March 1839, but **THE SPEECH**, the **GREAT**, the **GLORIOUS SPEECH**, the dawn of reason, the great landmark 'twixt ignorance and knowledge, folly and wisdom, falsehood and truth, darkness and light! And you—you are opposing! You want to quench the blazing flame!—stem the mighty torrent!—clench the lightning's flash!—rebel against the Queen of truth? Try it! Time's grim *pillory*, with the mocks, derisions, and scorn of ages present and to come, will be your post of honour! Your momentary triumph will gain but the foolscap and bells for trophies wherewith the world will deck your statues. Harlequin's lathen wand will be your sceptre, and "*I can't consent*" the superscription, that shall perpetuate your immortality! Immortality? Pshaw!

When Great Britain shall amaze mankind by power, wealth, and happiness, as yet unrecorded in history, and unconceived in romance—when her own native element, the sea (nature's great highway, which paltry monopoly would fain stop up, to add a few shillings to its acres) shall be moved to and fro by the bustle of uncountable fleets, and commerce shall have turned the ocean into the Royal Bourse of the world—when every good and wise man shall yearn to behold, at least once in his days, Albion's high cliffs, the sanctuary of liberty and common sense—when a Briton shall be hailed in every clime as the abstract of all that is manly, virtuous, and wise—when mankind shall turn their astonished looks with awe, veneration, and love, to this great temple of honour and truth—when princes

and nobles shall envy the poorest man for being an Englishman—when kings shall have our laws engraven on tablets, and place them next to the holy gospel—when our legislators shall be the teachers of nations, and our sovereign shall subject the world by the irresistible sway of justice and faith—“when peace on earth, goodwill amongst men,” shall be the watchword and the bond all over the globe—then you shall be as the poor idiot, slipping for awhile out of his dark cell,—sliding slyly into high places and the judgment seat—you shall be like the poor player,

“That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.”

DIOGENES.

THE END.

